

**Bibliotheca Persica**

Modern Persian Literature Series

Edited by Ehsan Yarshater

Number 4

**Jalal Al-e Ahmad**

**Plagued by the West**  
***(Gharbzadegi)***

Translated from the Persian

by

**Paul Sprachman**



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## Foreword

*Plagued by the West* is an essay in social criticism. No other essay in modern Persian history has had the same vogue or has achieved comparable success. Its title has become a catch phrase, used to epitomize in four syllables the basic ill of modern Persian society.

The book was banned under the previous regime after a partial publication was suppressed; it underwent several clandestine printings, and then, with the outbreak of the revolution of 1979, flooded almost every bookshop and bookstand in Iran. Ever since, it has been one of the books most avidly read and hotly discussed by those interested in Iranian affairs or in understanding the Iranian revolution. The violent outburst of the revolution was widely held to have vindicated Al-e Ahmad's prognosis of Iranian malaise, and many saw, in retrospect, in the pages of *Plagued by the West* a plausible explanation of a revolution which took the world by surprise.

The significance of *Plagued by the West*, however, is not based on its social pertinence alone. It is also a work of literary merit. It is hard to put it down once you have taken up the original Persian. It uses the same literary devices that characterize most of Al-e Ahmad's works of fiction. Chief among these devices is the exposing of the reader to continual, if small, shock treatments and surprises. One may agree or disagree with Al-e Ahmad's views, one may find them penetrating or lacking in depth, one may consider the information on which he bases his judgment incomplete or his facts selective, but one hardly ever experiences any boredom from him. By constantly confronting the reader with the unexpected, his style keeps up the reader's interest, titillates his curiosity and affords him a constant literary pleasure.

Al-e Ahmad's technique in forging his provocative style is varied. At the heart of it lies his irreverence. Although earnest in his quest, he is often flippant in the use of language. He mixes the exalted idioms and lofty expressions of the old masters in reference to trivialities and, conversely, engages folk idioms and slangish phraseology to express his serious ideas and sentiments. Words and images are often at odds with their context, as if the intended meaning and the verbal texture were engaged in a game of reciprocal banter. By a judicious combination of the sublime and the ridiculous, as it were, Al-e Ahmad manages to sustain a lively, bittersweet manner of writing

in which the overtones of expressions and metaphors clash with cynical or humorous effect. In a style which imparts a satirical quality to his social criticism, irony and sarcasm are among other devices of reduction that he frequently uses to drive a point home. His predilection for pert, crisp, and laconic sentences keeps the reader busy filling invisible gaps and supplying the unexpressed details, thus participating in the process of composition. This all adds up to a mannerism, eminently original and invariably fascinating, which bears the mark of Al-e Ahmad's personality and reveals his earnestness, his playfulness, and his emotional commitment to social causes all at the same time. The style that Sadeq Hedayat used in his verbal communication with friends, Al-e Ahmad employs with greater dexterity and finesse in his writing. The jocose and seemingly impersonal mannerism in the case of both writers appears to veil deep-rooted shyness and unavowed sentimentality.

It must be apparent that it is almost impossible to render Al-e Ahmad's stylistic peculiarities in translation. He relies heavily for effects on the associated meanings of words and expressions and their overtones and undertones—features which are of necessity lost in translation. Yet the work was felt to be too important to be left out on account of the problems it poses for the translator. Paul Sprachman, in collaboration with Professor H. Moayyad of the University of Chicago, has met these problems valiantly and it is hoped that his able rendering of *Plagued by the West* will enhance the knowledge of the currents of thought in contemporary Persia.

*Ehsan Yarshater*

## Translator's Note

One of the basic difficulties in translating *Gharbzadegi* is deciding what to call it. "Gharbzadegi" is one way of transliterating a Persian compound noun composed of three elements: *gharb* = "West," *zada* = past participle of the verb *zadan* ("to strike"), and *gi* = a suffix used to generate an abstract noun. Those faced with this problem in the past have found various solutions. Peter Avery, writing not long after the book appeared, describes its topic as the "disease of Westernism."<sup>1</sup> Reza Baraheni, referring to an unpublished translation by him and William G. Millward, called the book "Westomania."<sup>2</sup> Michael Craig Hillmann chose the archaic, but etymologically more revealing, "Weststruckedness" in his translation of Chapter XI (present translation: Chapter IX).<sup>3</sup> Ebrahim Yazdi, the former Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic, perhaps because of his background in pharmacology, has coined the more clinical "Westernosis."<sup>4</sup> In thinking about a solution for this translation, the English usage of the suffix "-stricken" as in "plague-stricken" proved to be too common to ignore. As anyone who has been faced with the neologism "west-stricken" can tell you, however, the bulky expedient "west-strickenness" is unavoidable. Since "weststrickenness" was to be avoided at all costs, another neologism would have to be found. Ultimately what appeared to be a solution was found in the more euphonic, "westitis." This usage seemed all the more appropriate after I consulted the dictionary and learned that the suffix "itis" can be "extended in meaning to include abnormal states or conditions, excesses, tendencies, obsessions, etc." The two examples given are "telephonitis," and "baseballitis."<sup>5</sup> However, the adjectival form of the disease "westitis," "westitic," appeared to have as much cacaphonic potential as "west-strickenness." The stylistic dilemma presented by "west-strickenness"

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<sup>1</sup> *Modern Iran* (London: Ernest Benn, 1965) p. 468.

<sup>2</sup> *The Crowned Cannibals* (New York: Vintage, 1977) p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> *A Persian Reader* (Iran: American Peace Corps, 1973) pp. 5.16-5.28. See also the introduction to the English translation of Al-e Ahmad's *The School Principal* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1974) p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Middle East International*, no. 107, 31 August 1979, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Random House, 1973).

and “westitic” was finally avoided by means of a little lexical compromise. For the purposes of this translation the adjective *gharbzada*, lit. “struck by the West” in the text shall be “west-stricken” and the noun *gharbzadegi* shall be “westitis.” For the title of the essay, however, I have used with some license *Plagued by the West*, a title more revealing of the intention of the author.

Whatever the name of the disease, one reading of *Gharbzadegi* reveals that its most famous diagnostician, Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–1969) was in some ways one of its victims. It is quite evident from the tone of *Gharbzadegi* that the essay is, as George Steiner terms André Gide’s African narratives, a “moral polemic.”<sup>6</sup> It relies on traditional polemicist artillery: hyperbole, provocative inconsistencies and errors, jargon and ready-made phrases to frame its absolutist positions on Iranian history, education, and society.<sup>7</sup> Al-e Ahmad, the outraged author of *Gharbzadegi*, has literally been “struck” by the West. He has been struck by the advent of western industrialization in Iran, by western advertising, moral decay, magazines, and books. Even some of the Persian phrases with which Al-e Ahmad attacks the West have been struck (i.e. influenced) by the diction of western languages.

In *Gharbzadegi*, Al-e Ahmad’s vision of the West achieves the monolithic proportions of Kipling’s famous line. Regardless of the focus of the essay’s polemical outrage — whether politics, history, sociology — the ideological and cultural boundaries between East and West always remain constant. Al-e Ahmad’s attitude reminds one of Lenin’s unrelenting reaction to the West. Here is how Trotsky describes it:

Either the same or the next morning, Vladimir Ilyich and I went for a long walk around London. From a bridge, Lenin pointed out Westminster and some other famous buildings. I don’t remember the exact words he used, but what he conveyed was: ‘This is their famous Westminster,’ and ‘their’ referred of course not to the English but to the ruling classes. This implication, which was not in the least emphasized, but coming as it did from the very innermost depths of the man, and expressed more by the tone of his voice than by anything else, was always present, whether Lenin was speaking of the treasures of culture, of new achievements, of the wealth of books in the British Museum, of the information of the larger European newspapers, or years later, of German artillery or French aviation. They know this or they have that, they have made this or achieved that — but what enemies they are! To his eyes, the invisible

<sup>6</sup> *Language and Silence* (New York: Atheneum, 1972) p. 240.

<sup>7</sup> For an excellent stylistic analysis of this style see “Politics of the English Language” by George Orwell in *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1957) pp. 143–159.

shadow of the ruling classes always overlay the whole of human culture — a shadow that was as real to him as daylight.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, in *Gharbzadegi*, René Grousset is one of *their* (in this case the term is more comprehensive) historians, therefore, his views on eastern history are *their* views. *Time* is one of *their* news magazines, therefore, it reports the news the way *they* want it. The West haunts every corner of Iran's decline and is even responsible for the country's recent recovery.

Al-e Ahmad's absolutism, however, does not prevent him from recognizing certain admirable westerners. Predictably, sympathetic westerners are all perceived to echo *Gharbzadegi's* pessimism about the problems of western society. Charlie Chaplin, Albert Camus, André Gide, and Ingmar Bergman are western champions of the East admired for their ability to translate the undisputed superiority and originality of the East into terms westerners can understand.

Despite the obvious defects of what the author himself calls his "scribblings" or his "nonsense" (*abatil*), *Gharbzadegi* is an important essay. It is important first because it effectively voices what a large number of Iranians have felt in the past and are feeling today.<sup>9</sup> The essay is also important because it offers insight into the Iranian incarnation of twentieth century nihilism and into the kinds of ideas to which the Iranian student generation of the 1960s was exposed. Finally, *Gharbzadegi*, as a polemic, is important because it is good polemic; it achieves the level of provocation the author intended; one does not merely read the essay, one reacts to it. The reader is invited either to be emotionally committed to the ideas expressed in it or rebel against them. Al-e Ahmad whittles away at neutrality and indifference with his generalizations and appeals to emotions. The result is that few essays written in Persian in recent times have stirred as much controversy as *Gharbzadegi*.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in *To the Finland Station*, Edmund Wilson (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1953) pp. 414–15 [*My Life*, Leon Trotsky (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1970) p. 143.]

<sup>9</sup> In an article in the newly founded arts and public affairs journal *Sorush* (no. 14, 13 Mordad, 1358, August 4, 1979, p. 28) by Sadeq Qotbzada (the present Foreign Minister), Al-e Ahmad's name is linked with that of Dr. 'Ali Shari'ati (d. 1977.) the late ideologue of the Islamic Revolution. Both men are termed "models in the struggle of intellectuals to negate the influence of [westernism]" (*olgu-ye talash-e rowshanfekran dar nafy-e karpaziri*). This linkage would seem to indicate that Al-e Ahmad's ideological apotheosis can't be far behind.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my friend and teacher Dr. Heshmat Moayyad, for his helpful suggestions. I would also like to express my gratitude to my wife Susan without whom the translation would never have been finished.

Paul Sprachman

October 1979

## Author's Preface

The first draft of this book was a report submitted to the Council on the Educational Goals of Iran. It was given during two of the numerous sessions of the Council (Wednesday, 8th of Azar, 1340 [November 29, 1961] and Wednesday, 27th of Day, 1340 [January 17, 1962]). A volume containing the collected reports submitted to the Council was published in Bahman of 1341 [February, 1962] by the Ministry of Education. This report, however, was not deemed fit and was not permitted to be included in that volume. Although the time had come for the esteemed members of that Council to manage to listen to a report such as this, we still have not seen the day when one of the agencies of the Ministry of Education will be able to officially print it.

The report, therefore, remained unpublished and copies of the typescript circulated among friends and worthy thinkers who read it, discussed it, and added their comments. One of the outstanding people who read it was Dr. Mahmud Human, who strongly recommended that I read a work by the German writer Ernst Jünger. The work, *Über die Linie*, is a discussion of nihilism. According to Dr. Human, both Jünger and I address the same issue, albeit from two different points of view. We have both discussed one problem, but in two languages. I do not know German, so I appealed to Dr. Human for help and for three whole months, working three hours a day, three days a week I took advantage of Dr. Human's instruction and guidance. Thus, as he dictated and I copied, *Über die Linie* was translated into Persian.

While this was going on, in the beginning of 1341 [spring, 1962] the journal *Ketab-e mah* got started.<sup>10</sup> The first issue, containing the first chapter of *Über die Linie* and the first third of *Gharbzadegi* was suppressed. In the end it was decided to jettison the *Gharbzadegi* section and the journal was renamed *Kayhan-e mah*, which itself did not last more than one issue.

In Mehr of 1341 [September/October, 1962], I published the text of *Gharbzadegi* independently. This edition is that same text with some revisions and a rethinking of some of my former judgments.

Let me say here that I borrowed the term *gharbzadegi* from conversa-

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<sup>10</sup> [An advertisement for the first volume of this *Kayhan* publication appears in *Hafta-ye ketab* (No. 31, 13 April, 1962).]

tions I had with my other mentor Ahmad Fardid, who was one of the participants in the Council on the Educational Goals of Iran.<sup>11</sup> And if there was any communication of ideas at those meetings, that which occurred between us certainly attests to it. Mr. Fardid has much more to say on this subject that is worth listening to, and I was hoping that the impudence implicit in my writing would move him to speak out.

The present volume, the second edition, is somewhat more detailed than the first and was completed towards the beginning of 1963 so that it could be published in a “pocket book” format and distributed on a wider scale. It was suppressed while being printed, however, and the publisher, Bongah-e Javid, went out of business — and my reputation was shot. But is it really possible to give up completely?

In April of 1964, therefore, I rewrote it and sent the manuscript abroad so that it would be published and distributed by young students living outside of Iran. But this was not to be. And, as you see, these spoiled goods were returned to their owner C.O.D., in spite of their new design and packaging. You will forgive me, then, if I do not have the patience to rewrite the book once more, for if I had, what you see before you would have been a different work. Meanwhile, photocopies of the first “edition” were distributed in secret and without the permission of the author on numerous occasions in Tehran and once in California. And what a ridiculous sum of money people wasted on these pirate copies! Long live the censor who denied me the right to publish in Iran and, for all intents and purposes, gave the right to others, who had the nerve to market it and to reap the profits!

It was in this way that the trivialities in this book were rumored about more than they were discussed. Truths were not revealed, rather a title was bandied about. But because one or two critics here and there, whose writings were instructive to me and whose good advice I followed, were able to wake up after a long time, I came to believe in the possibility of reviving this book. Contrary to my expectations, I came to believe that these confused pages were still worthy of discussion after some six or seven years. I myself had believed that the book was only topical and would be out of date at most two years after it was written. But as you see, the pain is still in the limbs and the disease increases its scope of infection daily. I am still satisfied with the book, therefore, despite all of its hasty judgments and interpretations. You will pardon me if, after passing through many sieves, my remarks have remained so impudent. I also hope that you will protect the book from the piracy of the Princes of Evil of our time who are the devil’s helpers.

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<sup>11</sup> [Ahmad Fardid until recently was a professor of European philosophy at the University of Tehran.]

# I. An Outline of the Illness

I speak of being afflicted with “westitis” the way I would speak of being afflicted with cholera. If this is not palatable let us say it is akin to being stricken by heat or by cold. But it is not that either. It is something more on the order of being attacked by tongue worm. Have you ever seen how wheat rots? From within. The husk remains whole, but it is only an empty shell like the discarded chrysalis of a butterfly hanging from a tree. In any case, we are dealing with a sickness, a disease imported from abroad, and developed in an environment receptive to it. Let us discover the characteristics of this illness and its cause or causes and, if possible, find a cure.

Being stricken by the West has two sides: one is the West and the other, we who are afflicted by the West. “We” meaning a corner of the East. In place of two “sides” let us say two poles or two ends, since we are dealing in fact with two ends of a graduated scale or rather two opposite ends of the world. In place of the “West,” we can say almost all of Europe and Soviet Russia and all of North America. Or let us say all of the advanced or developed countries or industrialized countries or all of the countries which, with the aid of machines, are capable of converting raw materials into something more complex and marketing it in the form of manufactured goods. These raw materials are not just iron ore or oil or gut or cotton or tragacanth. They are also myths, principles of belief, music, and transcendental realities.

In place of “we” who are a part of the other pole, let us say Asia and Africa or the backward or developing or the nonindustrialized countries or all of the countries which are the users of western manufactured products. The raw materials for these products — those which I enumerated — have been taken from this side of the world, i.e., from the developing countries! Oil from the shores of the Persian Gulf; jute and spices from India; jazz from Africa; silk and opium from China; anthropology from the islands of Oceania; sociology from Africa. The last two from South America as well — from the Aztecs and Incas who were the victims of the advent of Christianity. In any case, something from somewhere. We are caught in the middle of all this; however, we share more points of comparison with this last group than degrees of distinction and difference.

It is not in the scope of this essay to define these two poles, these two

extremes, from the point of view of economics or politics or sociology or psychology or civilization. That is an exacting task, a task for the experts. But you will notice that occasionally, out of necessity, we will call upon a general knowledge of these different areas for help. The only thing that can be said here along these lines is that, in my view, "East" and "West" are not two geographical concepts. For an American or a European, "West" means Europe and America and "East" means Soviet Russia, China, and the eastern European countries. But for me, "West" and "East" have neither political nor geographical meaning. Instead they are two economic concepts. "West" means the well-fed countries and "East" means the hungry countries. For me the state of South Africa is a piece of the "West," even though it forms the southern tip of Africa. Most of the countries of Latin America are part of the "East," even though they are on the other side of the globe. In any event, although it is correct that the exact nature of an earthquake must be learned from a seismographer in a university, before anything can be recorded, a farmer's horse (even if he is not a thoroughbred) will have escaped the area and fled to the safety of the fields. With more awareness than a sheep dog, and with vision more farsighted than a crow's, I would like to see something that others, because their eyes are closed or because they see no advantage or profit for themselves in presenting it, have overlooked and decided not to see.

Let us define, therefore, the countries of the first group with the following general characteristics (arranged in no particular order): high wages, low mortality rate, low birth rates, well organized social services, sufficient food (at least 3000 calories per day), an average annual income of more than 3000 *tomans*,<sup>12</sup> all the trappings of democracy, and a liberal inheritance from the French revolution.

The countries of the second group have the following characteristics (presented in neat little rhetorical bundles): low wages, high mortality rates, an even higher birth rate, no social services or the pretense of social services, malnutrition (at most 1000 calories per day), an annual per capita income of less than 500 *tomans*, no inkling of democracy, and an inheritance going back to the very beginnings of colonialism.

It is obvious that we belong to this second group, to the group of hungry nations. The first group, to use the phrase of Josué de Castro in his book *The Geography of Hunger*,<sup>13</sup> comprises all the well-fed nations. You see that between these two extremes not only is there a huge gap, but also, in the words of Tibor Mende,<sup>14</sup> an unfillable chasm which grows deeper and wider day-by-day in such a way that wealth and poverty, power and impotence, knowledge and ignorance, prosperity and desolation, civilization and savagery have

<sup>12</sup> [In the mid-1950s, worth about \$370.00.]

<sup>13</sup> [Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1952.]

<sup>14</sup> [Tibor Mende, *Reflexions sur l'histoire d'aujourd'hui: Entre le peur et l'espoir* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1958). The author is paraphrasing material from this book.]

become global extremes. One pole belongs to the well-fed, the rich, the powerful, the producers and exporters of manufactured products; whereas the other pole is that of the hungry, the poor, the weak, and the consumers and importers. The pulse of progress beats on that side of the world of ascendance and the throb of decline on this side of a world petering out. The difference does not merely arise out of temporal or spatial dimensions, nor is it measurable in terms of quantity — it is a qualitative difference. The two poles are estranged from one another. They are inclined towards mutual remoteness. On that side is a world which is frightened of its own dynamism and on this side is our world which has not yet been able to find a way to channel its undirected and therefore wasted energies. Both of these worlds are in motion, each in a different direction.

Now, with this way of looking at things, the time when we could divide the world into two “blocks” has passed — into the two blocks “East” and “West,” either communist or noncommunist. Although the first article of the constitution of most of the world’s countries is still the same old dodge of the twentieth century, the way in which America and Russia (the two supposedly unchallenged head croupiers of the two blocks) gambled with each other over the Suez canal issue and Cuba shows that the headmen of two neighboring villages can still easily manage to come to terms. And of course in the wake of that, consider the nuclear test ban treaty and the other cases of cooperation. Our age, therefore, in addition to not being one of confrontation between the rich and poor classes within national boundaries, nor one of national revolutions, is also not an age of confrontations between “isms” and ideologies. Behind every disturbance or every coup d’etat or revolution in Zanzibar or Syria or Uruguay one must find the colonial company or state, secretly backing the conspiracy. The local wars of our age can no longer be defined as wars of differing ideologies, not even on the surface. These days every school-child knows that the Second World War was just a pretext for the spread and expansion of the mechanized industries of both sides; but also, even in the Cuban crisis, the Congo, the Suez Canal, or Algeria he sees the struggle for sugar, diamonds, and oil respectively. One can see in the bloodshed in Cyprus, Zanzibar, Aden, and Vietnam the struggle to gain a bridgehead to defend the avenues of trade, which are the primary factors in determining a state’s policy.

Our age is no longer one in which people in the “West” can be made to fear “Communism” and people in the “East” made to fear the bourgeoisie and liberalism. Nowadays even kings can appear revolutionary on the surface and use suspicious i.e., “leftist” [?] language, and Khrushchev can buy wheat from America. Today all of the “isms” and ideologies have become paths leading to the exalted throne of “mechanism” and mechanization. In this respect the most interesting development is the deviation to the far east of the political compasses of leftists and quasi-leftists all over the world; i.e., the ninety degree turn away from Moscow towards Peking. Soviet Russia is no longer “the leader of world revolution,” instead it is one of the leading competitors in the

nuclear arms race. Direct telegraph communications have been set up between the Kremlin and the White House, a sign that even British mediation between the two powers is no longer necessary. Even the leaders of our country are aware that the danger of Soviet Russia has decreased. At one time, the Soviet Union was grazing on the meagre pastures of desolation left in the wake of World War I. Now it is the era of de-Stalinization, and Radio Moscow has actually come out in support of the Referendum of the Sixth of Bahman!<sup>15</sup> In any case, Communist China has taken the place of the Soviet Union, because like Russia in 1930 it calls upon all the world's hungry peoples to unite in the hope of reaching the heaven of tomorrow. The Soviet Union in those years had a population of a little over one hundred million; whereas China now has 750 million people. Just as Marx pointed out about his age, we today have two worlds in a state of conflict. But these two worlds have attained dimensions much wider than those of his time, and the conflict has taken on more complexity than the conflict between worker and boss. Ours is a world of confrontation between rich and poor, extending over the entire globe. Our age is one of two worlds: one engaged in making, operating, and exporting machines; the other involved in consuming, wearing down, and importing them. The arena of that conflict is the world marketplace. Its weapons are in addition to tanks, artillery, bombers, and missile launchers, which themselves are the products of the western world, UNESCO, FAO, the United Nations, ECAFE, and other so-called international agencies, all appearing to be communal and global. But, as a matter of fact, they are the same little western dodges which, dressed in new clothes, are used in the colonization of South America, Asia, Africa. The basis of the "westitis" of all these nonwestern countries lies here. We are not talking about the abolition of machines or their rejection; i.e., what supporters of utopian societies in the beginning of the nineteenth century fancied. Never! The world is caught up in the machine of historical determinism. Our discussion, rather, is on the way we deal with machines and technology.

The point is that we of the developing nations — the people of the second group of countries I defined — are not makers of machines. But, forced by economics, politics, and that global confrontation between poverty and wealth, we must be polite and servile consumers of the products of western industry, or at best we must be satisfied, subservient, and low-paid repairmen for whatever comes from the west. It is this last which necessitates that we reshape ourselves, our government, our culture, and our everyday lives into some semblance of a machine. Everything of ours must meet machine specifications. And if the makers of machines, after a gradual process of change of some 200 years, have slowly become used to this new god, its heaven and its

<sup>15</sup> January 27, 1964, known as the "Day of the Revolution of the Shah and the People," when, according to government figures, 5,598,711 people voted for the six principles of the White Revolution.

hell, what about the Kuwaitis who only yesterday found access to machines, or the Congolese or we Iranians? In what manner can we bridge this 300 year historical gap? Let us forget about the others and concentrate on ourselves. The basic point of this book is that we have not been able to preserve our “cultural-historical” personality in the face of the machine and its unavoidable onslaught. Rather we have been crushed by events.<sup>16</sup> The point is that we have not been able to maintain a well-thought-out and considered position vis-à-vis this monster of the modern age. The fact is that until we have actually grasped the essence, basis, and philosophy of western civilization and no longer superficially mimic the West in our consumption of western products, we shall be just like the ass who wore a lion skin. And we know what happened to him. While the machine-makers of today are themselves complaining and suffering, we do not complain, not even now that we are dressed up like the machine’s servants — we even try to look good in our new uniforms! In any case, it is now some 200 years that we are crows acting like partridges.<sup>17</sup> From all that we have outlined so far, one obvious fact emerges. As long as we are solely consumers, as long as we do not manufacture machines, we shall be afflicted with the West. And the ironic part is that as soon as we are able to make machines, we shall become machine-stricken! We will be like people of the West whose cries about self-willed technology and machines are heard everywhere.<sup>18</sup>

Let us admit that we did not even have the will to be like Japan which came to grips with the machine some 100 years ago. From that time, it began to rival the West in its machine-mania. It defeated the Czar in 1905 and America in 1941,<sup>19</sup> and, even before that, was able to take away western markets. In the end it was destroyed with the atomic bomb as an object lesson. Now, if the “free countries” of the West have opened up a corner of the world’s marketplace to Japanese goods, it is because they have invested in every Japanese industry, and also because they intend to cover all of the military expenses of defending those islands whose leaders have, since World War II, come to their senses, i.e., in matters of weaponry, troops, and military alliances, they have become total knownothings. Or perhaps the average American wants to ease his conscience which caused the pilot of that hellish plane to go mad.<sup>20</sup> The story of ‘Ad and Thamud<sup>21</sup> was repeated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

<sup>16</sup> I have illustrated this very issue in *Jazira-ye kharg* (Tehran: Danesh, 1960).

<sup>17</sup> [If we take for granted the identity of crows and partridges]

<sup>18</sup> For example see *La France contre les Robots* by George Bernanos (Paris: Plon, 1970).

<sup>19</sup> [This is not exactly accurate, even though Japan initially caused great damage to the American navy.]

<sup>20</sup> The name of the pilot was Claude R. Eatherly. See the book *Avoir détruit Hiroshima*, ed. by Robert Laffort (Paris). Claude R. Eatherly was not the pilot of the Enola Gay, he was the pilot of the advance plane, the Straight Flush.

<sup>21</sup> [Two pre-Islamic Arabian tribes all traces of which were wiped out.]

There is another obvious point here. The “West” began to call us (everyone from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean to India) “The East,” as soon as it awoke from its medieval hibernation, and came in search of sun, spices, silk, and other goods. At first westerners came in the guise of pilgrims, visiting the Christian holy places (Bethlehem, Nazareth, etc.), then as warriors in the Crusades, later as merchants, then sheltered by the guns of ships loaded with goods, then as Christian missionaries, and finally as missionaries of urbanization and civilization. This last mission seems to have been almost preordained; after all, the word *este‘mar* (“colonization”) is from the same root as the word *‘omran* (“building up, settling”), and if one wants to “settle” one has to be involved with “cities.”

The interesting thing is that of all the places that were settled under the boots of colonial masters, Africa was the most receptive and most promising. Do you know why? Because in addition to the natural resources which it had in abundance — gold, diamonds, copper, ivory, and many other natural resources — its natives never had a tradition of urban settlement, nor did they have a widespread unifying faith. Each tribe had its own god, chief, customs, and language. And how diffuse! And, as a result, how receptive to domination! More important than all of this, however, was that all the natives of Africa went around naked. Wearing clothes is impossible in that heat. When Stanley, the comparatively humane English traveler [*sic*], returned with this last piece of good news from the Congo, there was jubilation and thanksgiving in Manchester. After all, each year three meters of cloth for every person (just one shirt which the women and men of the Congo would wear to become civilized, and participate in Church ceremonies) translated into about 320 million yards of cloth yearly from the mills of Manchester.<sup>22</sup> We know that the advance scouts of colonialism were Christian missionaries, and that beside every trading post all over the world a church was constructed. The natives would be lured into them with various ploys. Now, with the withdrawal of colonialism from these areas, for each colonial agency boarded up, a church also is closed.

For the colonists, Africa was also more receptive and more promising because the natives themselves represented raw materials for every kind of western laboratory. The principles of anthropology, sociology, ethnography, dialectology, and a thousand other “ologies” could be recorded based on fieldwork carried out in Africa and Australia. The professors at Cambridge, the Sorbonne, and Leyden by using these same “ologies” could become established in their university chairs, and see the other side of the coin of their own urbanization in the primitive areas of Africa.

But as for us easterners of the Middle East, we were neither as receptive nor as promising as the Africans. Why? If we want to be more intimate, i.e.,

<sup>22</sup> *Du Zambeze au Tanganika, 1858-72, par Livingstone et Stanley*, Paris, 1958.

“keep the discussion between ourselves,” I must ask, rather: why were we Muslim easterners not as receptive? You see that the answer is contained in the question. Apparently within the Islamic totality itself we were not considered a subject suitable for investigation. For the same reason, the West, in its dealing with us, not only struggled against this Islamic totality (in the case of the bloody instigation of Shi‘ism of Safavid times, in the creation of friction between us and the Ottomans, in the promoting the Baha’i activities in the middle of the Qajar period, in the crushing of the Ottomans after the first World War, and finally in the opposition to the Shi‘ite clergy during the Constitutional Revolution and afterwards . . .), but it also tried to as quickly as possible tear apart that unity which was fragmented from within and which only appeared whole on the surface. They tried first to turn us into raw material, as they did the natives in Africa, and afterwards bring us to their laboratories. It was because of this that among the many encyclopedias produced in the West, the *Encyclopedia of Islam* is the most important. We are still asleep but the westerner in this encyclopedia has brought us to his laboratory. India was almost the same as Africa, with its “confusion of tongues,” and the diversity of its races and religions. Then again, South America was completely converted to Christianity under the swords of the Spanish, and Oceania was a collection of islands, i.e., the best geography for sowing division. It was our lot then to be the only ones, both in the guise and the reality of an Islamic totality, to stand in the way of the advance of European civilization (read: colonialism; Christianity), i.e., in the way of the drive to market western industry. The stopping of Ottoman artillery outside of the gates of Vienna in the nineteenth [*sic*] century was the end of a prolonged event which had begun in 732 in Spain (Andalus).<sup>23</sup> How can we view these twelve centuries of struggle and competition between East and West as anything but a struggle between Islam and Christianity? In any event — in the age we live in — I, the Asian remnant of that Islamic totality, shall be accepted by the civilized (!) nations of the West and the makers of machines just as much (to the same extent) as the African and Australian survivor of primitive culture or savagery, if I, like them, agree to be satisfied with life as a museum exhibit, satisfied with being only a thing, an object suitable for investigation in a museum or a laboratory. And nothing more. God help you if you tamper with this raw material! Today the issue is not whether they want the oil of Khuzestan or that of Qatar, or whether the diamonds of Katanga are cut or the chromite ore of Kerman is processed. It is, rather, that I, the Asian and African, must even preserve my literature, my culture, my music, my religion,

<sup>23</sup> I am referring to the defeat of ‘Abd al-Rahman Omavi (the head of the Caliphate of Andalus) at the hands of Charles Martel, the French commander, at Poitiers and to the halt of the expansion of the western Islamic caliphate. Note that “Martel” is today the name of a well-known cognac.

and everything else I possess exactly as if they were freshly unearthed antiques, so that these civilized gentlemen can come, dig, take them away, and place them in museums and say, "Yes, here we have another primitive culture!"<sup>24</sup>

After these introductory remarks, allow me as an easterner with one foot in tradition and eager to jump some two or three hundred years into the future, forced to make up for all the backwardness and stagnation and anchored in that fragmented Islamic whole, allow me to define "westitis" this way: a complex of circumstances which comes about in the life, culture, civilization, and way of thinking of a people in one spot on the globe without any kind of supporting cultural context or historical continuity, or any evolving method of integration, coming about only as a result of the charity of machines. Having defined westitis this way, it is clear that we are among those afflicted with the disease. Since the subject of this book relates in the first place to the geographical, linguistic, traditional, and religious environment of its author, it is even clearer that if we say that once we have machines, i.e., once we make our own machines, then there will be no need for their presents or their charity, nor, as a result, will there be a need for all those things which come before and along with them.

Westitis, therefore, is a characteristic of the age in our history in which we still have not mastered machines, and in which we do not know the secret of their organization and structure; in which we still have not become familiar with the basics of machines and with the new sciences and technology; in which we, forced by the market place, economics, and the flow of oil, find ourselves buying and using machines.

How did this age come about? How is it that, while we were totally isolated from the development of the machine, others made and operated them and developed, and we, when we finally woke up, saw that every oil rig was a nail driven into our coffin? How did we become west-stricken?

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<sup>24</sup> My respected friend Thaminra Baghchaban, the music scholar, writes the following in unpublished notes on the Tehran Congress of Music in January 1961:

For D. L. (the French delegate) there would be nothing more fascinating than if we Iranians were living in the age of the Sassanian kings and were the proper subjects of study for him. He would then come from the heart of the twentieth century with sensitive instruments and the latest in tape recordings, to the Sassanian court to record the performances of minstrels like Barbad and Nakisa and would return directly to Paris on an Air France jet from the airport near the Sassanian capital constructed especially for orientologists and authorities on poetry, and music.

## II. The Roots of the Illness

It appears from history that we have always been watching the West. We used the term “western” before foreigners called us “eastern.” Just read Ebn Battuta, or, before him, remember that Jabal al-Tareq [Gibraltar] was the “western” extremity of Islam. From the dawn of Islamic civilization until the crumbling of all our values in the face of technological domination, we, on this side of the world, like small pieces of a total civilization, have always seen the world in our own terms, and labeled it with our own terms before others did the same to us. Is it not true that every height has its own depth? If we look some one or two thousand years into the past and observe generally what was around then in the Middle East we would see that Chaldea, Assyria, Elam, Egypt, the Jews, Buddha, and Zoroaster originated in this vast area, from the Sind to the Nile valley and were responsible for the only things to be found in the coffers of western civilization. All boasting and bragging aside, of course!

Before even glancing at the Far East (China, Indo-China, and India which offered china, printing, the chair, mysticism, painting, self-control [yoga], meditation [the rites of Zen], saffron, spices, malt, etc.), this multi-faceted “we” was far more concerned with the West. We were looking towards the shores of the Mediterranean, towards Greece, the Nile Valley, Lydia (central Turkey), towards the far west and the seas to the north brimming over with ambergris. We, the inhabitants of the Iranian plateau, were also a part of this whole. And why were we so preoccupied with the West? We might approximate an answer here. Note that we have narrowed our discussion and are focusing on Iranians.

Perhaps our first thoughts about the West came from the escape from Mother India. Flight from our origins? Who knows? This will have to be explained through ethnography, Aryan Studies quackery, and “Indo-European” linguistics. I am only guessing. In any case, there can be no doubt about the warm embrace provided by our ur-mother during those hard days. Later on, it was again India which offered a haven to the remnants of the Zoroastrians who, like stubborn fools, did not even pay the Islamic *jezya*,<sup>25</sup> packed up lock,

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<sup>25</sup> [A poll tax levied against non-Muslims.]

stock, and barrel, and found refuge in India. Today there are Parsis in India (the descendants of these refugees) who, during the colonial period, aided the cause of British tyranny something awful. And even today they still have a tight hold on the industrial aristocracy of India. During the Mongol invasion, again it was India which provided a refuge and again, the last time, when Iranians were fleeing the zealous swords of Safavids pretending to be Sufis. As a result of these last two exoduses, what a storehouse of knowledge remained intact and what intellectual capital was saved from the ravages of time! But despite the warm motherly embrace of India, ever-present as a refuge for her wandering children, no child ever got anywhere nurtured in the loving embrace of its mother. Islam never got anywhere by remaining in Mecca. For this reason the migration to Medina came about, and afterwards the moves to Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Seville, and Cordova where it laid the foundation of grandeur worthy of an Empire. Similarly Christianity, which proclaimed itself in Galilee and Nazareth, right away raised its banners in the heart of the idolatrous Roman world. Manichaeism which sprung up in Ctesiphon was eventually buried in Turfan. Buddhism likewise grew up in India and traveled to the lands of the shining sun. In this way we who escaped from India (if this is in fact true) or we who turned our backs on her, began to notice the West. And, although we did interact in different ways with our supposed mother: with "love" in the form of the alleged travels of Bozormehr,<sup>26</sup> the wanderings of mendicant mystics and pilgrimages to Ceylon, and with hatred in the form of the religious wars of conquest fought by the damned Ghaznavid Mahmud and the assaults of the sheepskinned Nader [Shah], in our dealings with India we have never intended to be intimate. We have never shown bonds of kinship. Let me suggest that this very flight from our origins is a possible cause for what we have termed our westitis — something which is also a flight from the heat.

It is also possible that we have always looked to the West because pressure from nomadic tribes in the northeast has driven us in this direction. When the Aryans came they drove the mythical monsters of the *Shahnama* from Mazandaran to the shores of the Persian Gulf. Each tribe (whether Persian or Turkic) from the Turanians of the *Shahnama* and the Hephtalites to . . . , every few decades would pack up their tents and drive westward in search of new pastures in order to make up for the untimely but chronic droughts of the Qipchak plains. Cyrus also died in those far off deserts in search of the Scythians. The Oghuz, Seljuqs, and Mongols launched their drives from these steppes. The blood of Siyavosh, who was killed by Afrasiyab, flowed on these plains. In short, no century in our legendary or historical past has gone by without being marred once or twice by the hoofprints of nomadic invaders from the northeast. These sword-brandishing tribes are responsible for establishing practically every dynasty of the Islamic period, except for one

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<sup>26</sup> [The Sasanian vizier who is said to have brought chess from India to Iran.]

or two. And even before Islam: who, after all, were the Parthians? The tribe (the *ils*, not the “houses,” the *al*) has always determined the course of our history. Each time we tried to build a house, as soon as we got to the ramparts, some hungry invading tribe would come from the northeast and pull the ladder out from under our feet, destroying everything from the foundation up. Our cities on this vast expanse known as the Iranian Plateau have always been like pawns spread out on a chessboard to be moved about, or balls [to be kicked] by hunger-stricken nomadic cavalry from one place to another.<sup>27</sup> The dome of Soltaniyya with its architectural grandeur and its gigantic proportions still stands over this variegated plateau, winking at us through hundreds of chinks. In this vast area, only a limited number of our cities were able to grow up, prosper, reach old age, cease growing, and fall into decay naturally. And then, like a phoenix, immolate themselves and nourish their young offspring and their beauty, as Baghdad had done when it rose from the ruins of Ctesiphon. We therefore became “this too shall pass” people, and the notion that “everyone has his turn for a while” became part of our very beings. “Each newcomer builds a new building”<sup>28</sup> became the motto of our complacency.

It is thus possible to say that throughout our recorded history, we have had little opportunity to become city dwellers. We have not yet achieved city living or an urban civilization (*bourgeoisie*) in the strict sense of the word. And today even if one sees that through the *force majeure* of the machine we are getting used to city living and its demands, because this is a rapid process (albeit late in coming) it has necessarily become a symptom of cancer. Our cities today grow like cancerous cells. We will be doomed if they spread to the countryside and corrupt it.

One cannot merely judge the durability of urban civilization in Iran on the basis of the few remaining examples from the past, Shush in the plain of

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<sup>27</sup> It is an unadmitted historical fact that, although some forty years have passed since the October Revolution (an event which has been used continually to make us fear communism and Russia), it was only after the founding of the Soviet Union and its republics like Turkistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, that our urban culture was rescued from the constant threat of attacks by nomadic tribes in those areas. The establishment of new Soviet-style governments in these regions after 1917 led to the settlement of the nomads and the relative development of the steppes and the growth of cities. This was done with factories, farms, schools, and other urban institutions. There was, then, no tribal pattern of life to cause invasions, and even if there were, there was no need for the tribes to get in the saddle again, and travel hundreds of miles to reach Khorasan. They could stop and work in nearby cities, villages, and farms. In this way tribal pillaging, i.e., the invasion by foreign nomads from the northeast of the country, lost its meaning and, from the beginning of the twentieth century until now, in its place we have industrial pillaging (through oil) and invasion by the civilized foreigners in the west and southwest, instead of the northeast.

<sup>28</sup> [“With each newcomer a new structure is built / Eventually he goes and leaves it to another” — Sa’di]

Khuzestan, or Isfahan, Kashan, and Ray in the central plains. The edifices of our past history do not rest on pedestals, columns, walls, houses, and bazaars. Each new dynasty established its dominion on the ruins of the previous one, from the Sasanians who laid waste what remained of the Parthians to the Qajars who plastered over the doors and walls of Safavid buildings. You can see it even now as the National Bank is being constructed on the site of the old Takya-ye Dawlat<sup>29</sup> and the Finance Ministry on the old Khabgah-e Karim Khan<sup>30</sup> or when, in every corner of the city, they build schools over mosques and *emamzadas*.<sup>31</sup>

It has always amazed me that, in spite of our broad horizons, we are so short-sighted. It is only in the Achaemenian and Safavid periods that you find the generations cooperating to complete a structure. In the other periods of our history the idea that "each newcomer builds his own building" prevailed. And how? With the building materials of the previous rulers. It has reached such a state that only yesterday the marble grave slabs of believers were being transported from Abarqu to the imperial palaces in Tehran. In all corners of the country you notice that the foundations of every building are made of grave slabs and that every little bridge is constructed out of the building stones from a nearby fortress.

The structure of our half-urban civilization, then, is not something that was established by one ruler and then augmented and enhanced by succeeding generations. This quasi-urban culture of ours, which provided a home for imperial capitals, is a structure which rests on tent pegs and is fastened to the saddle. The Achaemenians had their winter and summer capitals, likewise the Sasanians; hence the existence of Shush and Ecbatana, both capitals; the same was true for Ctesiphon and Firuzabad. Archaeologists have even found abundant similarities between the tent and the arches in structures built in many of the periods of our history. And if I were to guess that this is one reason for why we remained stagnant, whereas the West moved on fast, I would not be far wrong.

We must also keep in mind that throughout our history on this wide plateau, we spent our summer nights on roof tops under the stars. It is true that nature has provided us with a dry climate and inhospitable weather. Our climatic hardships arise out of our arid setting and the need to cope with it. If there is no flooding (flooding being a characteristic of this area), the climate is still not that severe, unless the winter is a short one. None of our major cities have to suffer through more than three months of rain, snow, and ice. Should

<sup>29</sup> [A large circular hall built in the first half of the 19th century, used for performances of passion plays. In 1865 it was expanded by Naser al-Din Shah (d. 1296.)]

<sup>30</sup> [A large hall with portico, originally built by Karim Khan Zand (regent, 1750–1779).]

<sup>31</sup> [Shrines built over the tombs of the descendants of the imams.]

we not agree with Tibor Mende, therefore, who maintains that the great technology-using urban civilizations were only able to establish themselves in the colder climates situated between the Tropic of Cancer and the Arctic Circle?

Of course, the invaders of the Iranian plateau did not only come from the northeast. Alexander came from a region located in the northwest. Islam entered from the deserts to the southwest. As far as Alexander's period is concerned, despite the short or long intervals of his successors' Iranization and the first manifestation of westitis in our recorded history (i.e., the Philhellenism of the Parthians), our contact with Alexander and his troops was not like the contact we had with nomad cavalries from the northeast. It was, instead, an encounter with adventurers and mercenaries from cities along the shores of the Mediterranean, who, encouraged by tales in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, and with gaping saddlebags and their mouths watering, rode in search of the fabled wealth of the Iranian kings of kings. They came here desiring to gain access to the treasures of Ecbatana, Shush, and Estakhr. This is the first example of colonial expansion after the Phoenicians! We know that all of them had "edifice complexes," i.e., a need to build cities. While they pounded Tyre and Estakhr into the ground, they scattered the seeds of so many Alexandrias on their contemporary campsites from the mouth of the Nile to the Sind, that two of these cities still exist to this day, silently witnessing the comings and goings of the nouveaux riche along the blue expanse of the Mediterranean. In our first encounter with mercenaries, if there was any plundering, we started it.<sup>32</sup> Although we took a lot of punishment from the nomads to the northeast, we really gave it to the inhabitants of the cities along the Mediterranean coast, which is how Athens was burned and then Estakhr in retaliation.

As for Islam, it was only when it reached the area between the Tigris and Euphrates that it became true "Islam." Before that it was merely the nomadism and *jaheliyyat* [period of ignorance] of the Arabs. Islam had never before risen up to shed blood. While it is true we have heard much about the sword of Islam, do you not think that if such a thing were wielded at all it was in the West against Christianity? In any case, I feel that this image stems more from the confrontation between the Islamic *jihad* (holy war) and the self-styled martyrs of early Christianity. And even if this is not so, we know what kinds of things Christianity was capable of as soon as it became established; for example, during the Inquisition in Spain or in the settlement of South and Central America or in its conquest of Africa or the destruction of Khmer civilization in southeast Asia.<sup>33</sup> In any case, the peace offered by Islam is the

<sup>32</sup> See the article "Eskandar, gojasta ya bozorg" [Alexander, Damned or Great], Parviz Daryush, in *Ketab-e 'mah*, Khordad, 1341.

<sup>33</sup> For information on the Inquisition consult any history of European civilization at

most pacifistic message of all the world's religions. Aside from this, before Islam came to contend with us, we ourselves invited it to Iran.

Let us admit that it was really Rostam Farrokhzadi<sup>34</sup> who struggled in vain to defend the Sasanian cavalry and the petrified rites of Zoroastrianism; whereas the people of Ctesiphon stood in the streets, holding dates and bread to welcome the Arab advance troops who had come to plunder the royal palace and the Baharestan carpet.<sup>35</sup> Salman-e Faresi, years before Yazdagerd fled to Marv, escaped from Jay in Isfahan and found refuge in Medina with the Muslims and played such an important role in the development of Islam that, in comparison, it completely overshadows the role of the Magi astronomers in the development of Christianity. I do not feel, therefore, that we can view Islam as world conqueror in the way that we see Alexander as world conqueror. The mercenary, unbridled soldiers of that Macedonian leader were all exiles from their own native lands and had come here in search of plunder. Not one of them concealed the kind of faith in their quivers that drew the barefoot Arabs all the way to the Oxus and the Jaxartes. Notwithstanding the ideas of our bearded and mustachioed learned, who are a kind of latter-day Sho'ubiyya,<sup>36</sup> and in spite of 'Omar's book burners in Ray and Alexandria, Islam was a resounding, if belated "yes" to a summons which began three centuries earlier in the wastelands of former kingdoms — a summons which, in the forms of Manichaeism and Mazdakism was nipped in the bud and stifled in the mouth of their founders with hot lead. And if we examine the facts a little more impartially, we shall see that Islam itself was yet another movement based on the demands of urban people living between the Euphrates and Syria who had grown tired of the long wars between Iran and the Byzantine Empire. With the longing of parched animals, they thirsted after calm and would have become supporters of any movement which could make a prolonged peace in that region grow. We know that, in his youth, the Prophet traded with Syria and that he spoke with a certain monk there. And was there ever any easier way to proselytize than with the cry "Say: There is no God but Allah and ye shall prosper"? Moreover, in the final analysis, was not

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hand. On South America, read about the Conquistadors who, in the guise of missionaries of Christian love and peace, wiped out the civilization of the Aztecs and Incas. On Africa and southeast Asia consult respectively, André Gide's [*Voyage au Congo et*] *Le Retour du Tchad* and André Malraux's *La Voie Royale*, and most important of all, the small volume of Emma César, *On Colonialism* (translated by Hezarkhani, published by Nil.)

<sup>34</sup> [The commander of the Persian army at the battle of Qadesiyya.]

<sup>35</sup> [An extremely finely woven carpet with floral designs and an idyllic motif, laid out in the winter at the Ctesiphon palace to remind the Sasanian kings of spring (*bahar*).]

<sup>36</sup> [In this context the term *sho'ubiyya* refers to the movement of a group of scholars who objected to the Arab domination of Islamic civilization in the eighth and ninth centuries. In Iran, the movement is thought to represent a reawakening of local intellectualism and at times old heretical tendencies.]

our turning towards Islam in itself a turning towards the West? We will be able to provide a precise answer to this question once we have learned what incredible injustices were visited on people as a result of the ossified customs of the Sasanians.

Perhaps our turning towards the West stems from the fact that we on these broad, dry plains have always looked expectantly towards the path of the clouds from the Mediterranean. While it is true that the sun rises in the East, rain clouds always come to the inhabitants of the Iranian plateau from the West. On our quest for the source of clouds, water, and life, we also fled from the deserts of the south and the northeast — as opposed to the northern Europeans who were forced south to warm waters by the cold, damp, and ice of their native regions. The result was that, while searching for aphrodisiacs, the Europeans found their way to Africa, India, and America and paved the way for what later on became colonialism. This twofold movement is apparent throughout the history of human civilization. The appearance of the Aryans in Iran is itself the result of their being fed up with the north and the winters of Var-e Jamkard and Airyana Vaejah.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps it is a bit presumptuous, but I feel that if the Russians also had had an outlet to warm waters and, as a result, had been able to translate the dreams of Peter the Great into reality; if they, at the price of pillaging colonies to the south and southeast within their present boundaries, had been able to raise the wages, insurance benefits, and pensions of the workers of Petersburg and Baku to the level of the wages of workers of Manchester and Lyon; and if they had not been forced to put up with the frozen wastes and snow of Siberia or with the shifting sands of Turkistan, then mankind would not have been confronted with the 1917 Revolution. The penetration of the revolutionary practices of Russia into Africa and southeast Asia, the latest political development before the move of the Chinese, in itself attests to a desire which for years had been nipped in the bud. Now it has suddenly appeared on the scene in a new guise.

If we look again just a little more closely, we shall find many traces of this turning towards the West. While it is true that the elixir of eternal youth was hidden in the dark recesses of the East, it was a westerner, Alexander, who came looking for it. It was also one of our poets, Nezami Ganjavi, who called him a prophet and identified him with “Zu al-Qarnayn.”<sup>38</sup> The Garden of Eden is western, and ambergris has always come from the seas of the northwest. Even Baghdad, which was the Mecca for heretics, followers of Mani, is located on the western edge of the Iranian plateau. You have also no doubt heard the armies of the Zang<sup>39</sup> and Byzantines compared poetically to night

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<sup>37</sup> [According to legend, Var-e Jamkard was a fortress built by Jamshid, an Iranian mythical king and the first world sovereign, in order to protect men, animals, and other good creatures against the destructive snow storm predicted by Ahura Mazda.]

<sup>38</sup> [Literally “he of the two horns,” also mentioned in the Koran (XVIII, 83)]

<sup>39</sup> [i.e. black African]

and day or the tresses and face of the beloved. And it is probably for this reason that no seraglio in the East was without its Byzantine slave girls, who “heralded the dawn” and were bearers of “light and bright fortune.” Even mystical tradition with all of its “eastitis” (if one may use the term) portrays the old hermit Shaikh San‘an as an apostate, captivated by a Byzantine slave girl. Narges Khatun, the mother of the promised Shi‘ite messiah, the Mahdi, was a Byzantine slave girl. One can show many examples which reveal this pattern.

What is certain is that for us, a people who have never been hampered by prejudice or naiveté, the way to the West was always open. We, like Sa’di, also went to Mecca by way of Tripoli, and [as a result] got pressed into a gang of ditch diggers;<sup>40</sup> we made pilgrimages to Karbala and Najaf to unload our sins, and now we go to Europe to enjoy ourselves.

All conjecture aside, association with the West was only natural in the life of a people who wanted each day to live better than the day before and to know more and to die more peacefully. There is nothing extraordinary about it. It is simply a desire to mingle with one’s neighbors both near and far away, it is a wider search for humanity in different situations. But what is curious is that our interest in the West, until some 300 years ago, always had one aspect, one reason, and one motive. It was always out of enmity or jealousy or competition. In the last 300 years it has taken on another aspect, another motive, another cause. It is based on grief, regret, and subservience!

Up until these last three centuries we always envied the West or were belligerent towards it or rose up to compete with it because of its well-settled lands, its busy ports, quiet cities, and dependable rainfall. During those previous centuries, we too considered ourselves worthy of such bounty and thought our beliefs to be the Truth. We called the westerners “infidels” and thought them misguided. And, although in the face of the Zoroastrian prejudices of the Sasanians we sheltered their learned men, who had escaped from Alexandria and Constantinople, what is certain is that we always judged them by our own standards. At times we even carried things so far that we considered their lives and property fair game, and it was for this reason that we raided the West as soon as we felt we were able to. In any event, all this competition, jealousy, and enmity was for us a reason or a motive to improve the stereotype of Assyrian violence and emphasize its civilized aspects — to bring cedars from Lebanon, gold from Lydia, and, during the European Dark Ages, to translate and teach Aristotle and to adopt the Roman “legion system” or to learn their methods of constructing cities. As for the result of 2000 years of give and take with the West, despite all the defeats, victories, and

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<sup>40</sup> [Sa’di, the 13th century Persian author of the *Golestan* tells the story of his capture at the hands of the “Franks” and his being impressed into a gang of “pit diggers” (“Morals of Dervishess” Anecdote XXXI).]

devastation on both sides (something which is in itself a mystery of life), on the whole we can say that both were victorious. Neither side lost anything. If we did not compete as friends, at least we competed as rivals. And what could be better? We offered silk and oil; we acted as a channel for India, Zarathustra, and Mithra; we traveled all the way to Spain in the quivers of Islam; we placed the Indian and Khurasanian turban on the heads of the leaders of Islam; we turned the majestic *farr* (Iranian sign of kingship) into a halo and placed it over the Christian and Muslim saints, etc. But in these last two or three centuries things have really turned around. Indeed, I am referring to our grieving, sighing and regretting for ourselves.

Our sense of competition has been lost and a sense of powerlessness has taken its place, a sense of subservience. We not only no longer feel ourselves worthy and justified ("they take the oil because they're entitled to it and because we lack [the necessary] capability." "They run our politics because we are handcuffed." "They have taken our freedom away because we don't deserve it.") but, when justifying something which has to do with our livelihoods or religion, we even rely on their standards and on the instruction of their advisers to evaluate it. We learn in the same way, we record statistics in the same way, we do research in the same way, but these can be explained by the fact that the methods of science are uniform throughout the world and have no regional peculiarities. But what is really interesting is that we get married exactly the way westerners do; we mimic the cause of liberty as they do; we judge the world, dress, and write as they do; and we even rely on them to confirm whether it is day or night. One would think that all of our own standards are extinct. It has reached such a state that we are even proud to be their vermiform appendix. Today the fate of those two old rivals is, as you see, this: one has become a lowly groundskeeper and the other the owner of the ballpark. And what a ball game it is! Nine innings of genitals and thighs, charges of stupidity, mutual flattery, and bluster. So that they can get their hands on our oil! But what has happened in the last two or three centuries? What has happened to turn things around so?

Again, let us look at history . . .



### III. The Basic Source of the Flood

In these last three centuries, on the one hand, the western world has emerged from the crucible of the industrial revolution, and feudalism has given way to urban life. On the other hand, we in this corner of the East have taken refuge in a cocoon of “national unity” spun from the silk of Shi’ism. Everyday we spun more threads for the cocoon so that, even if we did revolt, we did it in religious dress, as Batenis,<sup>41</sup> Noqtavis,<sup>42</sup> Horufis,<sup>43</sup> and Baha’is. For every school and laboratory built in the West, we created another secret society and found sanctuary in the seven-fold mysteries of God’s “most majestic name.”<sup>44</sup> It was during these last three centuries that the West with the aid of machines has finally been able to achieve a truly gigantic productive capacity and has come to depend on a disorderly world marketplace both to obtain cheap raw materials and to sell its manufactured goods. It was during these two or three centuries that we, hiding behind shields brought over our heads out of fear of the Ottomans, fell asleep. Meanwhile the West had not only devoured the Ottoman Empire and had out of each scrap of bone fashioned a battle axe with which it would put down any popular revolt in Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, but was also soon to be coming after us. I see the roots of our westitis right here: on the one hand, the tentacles of western industry and, on the other, the weakness of a national government founded on a tradition of killing Sunnis. It stems from the time when our clergy forgot that the germs of tyranny and oppression had burrowed deeply into the leaders of the time;

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<sup>41</sup> [The term “Bateni” is applied generically to splinter religious groups who claim to know hidden (*baten*) truths.]

<sup>42</sup> [A heretical sect which appeared in Safavid times (ca. seventeenth century) and believed in (among other things) reincarnation.]

<sup>43</sup> [A sect which began in the fifteenth century and stressed the hidden meaning of letters (*huruf*).]

<sup>44</sup> *Esm-e a'zam*. “And” preceding this word in the original has been taken to be a misprint and superfluous.

from the time when Mir-e Damad<sup>45</sup> and Majlesi,<sup>46</sup> rewarded, by their tacit acquiescence, the militant Safavids for their spread of shi'ism and joined the services of the court and started inventing traditions [of the Prophet and imams (Hadith)]; from the time when we, knights mounted on the charger of the totality of Islam, became guardians of graveyards, became beggars at the door of the innocence of martyrs. We became caretakers of graveyards precisely on the day we abandoned the possibility of martyrdom and became satisfied with simply paying homage to the martyrs. I have illustrated this in my novel "The Letter Nun and the Pen."<sup>47</sup> You see that the issue once again has two sides. And in spite of the fact that this short essay has no pretensions of becoming a philosophy of history, I must make a passing reference to these two sides.

But the reasons for the industrial transformation of the West are not my concern. The westerners themselves have written reams on the subject. Besides, we who are totally west-stricken repeatedly spread western nonsense and myths on the subject in our schools, on the radio, and in print: the Renaissance, the discovery of the compass, the conquest of America, the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope, the invention of the steam engine, the reaching of India, the discovery of electricity, etc. One can even find examples of these platitudes in elementary geography books.

Let me make one more point in this regard and then go on. Finding itself almost completely surrounded by the Islamic world (from the east, south, and southwest) and facing extinction at the hands of Islamic kingdoms, the West (i.e., the Christian world of the Middle Ages) was forced to withdraw to those same states north of the Mediterranean and wake up reluctantly to the threat of Islam and, forsaking its hopelessness, began to fight back. It began to fight like a cat with its back to the wall. And when exactly did this happen? Towards the end of the sixth century (twelfth C.E.), i.e., at a time when the Islamic world was covered from end to end with schools, from Cordova in Andalus to Balkh and Bokhara; when all of Jerusalem and the eastern, southern, and western coasts of the Mediterranean were controlled by Muslims. Even Sicily was a Muslim stronghold. Immediately afterwards, peace-loving Christians who were reproachful of the Islamic holy war turned into crusading warriors and, during prolonged wars of religious conquest, laid the groundwork for the western borrowing Islamic arts and sciences. After five or six centuries, the Christian world created with this knowledge the lords of Capital, Technique, and Science and, after seven or eight centuries, the lords of Industry, Machine,

<sup>45</sup> [Mir Mohammad Baqer "Damad" was a natural philosopher and theologian of the Safavid period (d. 1632).]

<sup>46</sup> [Molla Mohammad Taqi Majlisi was a Shi'ite theologian who died in 1700 and was important in collecting a Shi'ite tradition during the Safavid period.]

<sup>47</sup> *Nun wa 'al-qalam* (Tehran, 1962)]

and Technology. If the Christian West, therefore, terrified by extinction in the face of the threat of Islam, suddenly woke up, made a stand and rose to meet the challenge and, as a result, saved itself, is it not high time that we also, in the face of the power of the West, recognize the danger, rise up, make a stand, and fight? But as to that weakness of ours and our untimely sleep, there are one or two points rarely heard or read about which I would like to address.

The first point is that before the discovery of new sea routes, the Iranian plateau was the biggest, if not the only, passageway joining the Far East with the Far West (from China and India to the shores of the Mediterranean.) It was the corridor for silk, spices, paper, and other goods heading for the West. Our robust cities raised their walls along the routes of caravans loaded with riches and, like little islands of safety, harbored these caravans from both ends of the world under their shady porticos. This filled both the cities and the countryside with hustle and bustle. The road which joined Qandahar, Herat, Tus, Nishapur (of the hundred gates), Ray, Qazvin, Tabriz, Khoy, and Erzurum and joined up with Trabzon or with Diyarbakir and Tripoli was here. This was the northern silk route. There was another route which went through the shores of Sind, connected with Hormoz and Qeshm by sea and afterwards traveled to Kerman, Yazd, Isfahan, Varamin, Sava, Hamadan, Kermanshah, and Mosul, until it joined up with the eastern parts of the Mediterranean. Not taking into account the Caspian litoral and the plain of Khuzestan, both of which have their own separate histories, the oldest civilization on the Iranian plateau is found in these same cities, or on their outskirts, buried in the folds of the mountains. But from the time that sea routes were opened up and seamen found courage to pierce the heart of the ocean without having to remain in sight of the nearby safe shores — from that time onward (in addition to the fact that the West had gained access to the New World and this in itself was a kind of bridge for them on that side of the world), on this side the only thing that remained of our cities, of our incomplete urban life, and of our civilization was an empty shell, lying on the ground like a discarded snakeskin: the shell of caravansaries, the shell of cities, the shell of our customs and culture, the shell of our religion and beliefs, the shell of our economic principles. It was after that time that there was poverty in the strict sense of the word, and we became a forgotten people in the world of the living. Iran became a graveyard for memorials and souvenirs of the bustling thoroughfares and caravans loaded with goods.<sup>48</sup> From the time when wealth

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<sup>48</sup> We have abundant examples of this type of city. Hormoz, Bandar 'Abbas, Bushire, Kerman, Yazd, Abarqu, etc. I have visited most of them. Note the words of a manuscript called "*Rahnema-ye Iran*" ["Guide to Iran"] by Farrokh Ghaffari:

Estakhri found Abarqu to be a functioning city in 340 A. H. [951/2 C. E.] and Ebn Hawqal notes twenty-five years later that the city's bazaars were standing. This

turned its back on our cities and began to flow to the West directly by sea from India and China, we became forgotten. It is exactly from that time onward that we burrowed into the Safavid-style cocoon of sufism and into the cocoon of the rule of national unity based on Shi'ism. The world turned away from us and we turned away from the world, and from that time we have considered the West ritually impure. When the two ends of the world which no longer needed the hospitality of our caravansaries could reach each other, we became a neutral region on the border of India. A region which had to remain quiet, incapable of any clumsy meddling, a region which had to make sure that it never caused trouble for India or posed a threat to the East India Company. And this situation continued for a long time until oil reared its monstrous head in Khuzestan. Then we again became the center of global attention and the source of disputes between East and West and between America and England. In any case, in our study of the reasons for the stagnation of the Middle East in these last three centuries and the reasons for the westerners leaping ahead during the same period, we have never seen anyone make reference to this point, which is worthy of quite a bit of discussion and research.

The second point: the Dukes of the republic of Venice, in other words the vanguards of Christian mercantilism or Christian merchants, were not the first ones to turn to the idolatrous tribes of the northeast for help in trying to repel the evil of the Muslims (i.e., their opponents in the Crusades) and to form a united front. Before them the Caliphs of Baghdad craftily played the same card in order to put down the uprisings in Khorasan and Iraq and spread their treachery to the plains of Qaraqurum. Gradually they gave the various tribal and nomadic groups (the Ghuzz, Seljuqs, and Mongols) passage, grazing, and settlement rights to all parts of the eastern Islamic world. Things reached such a state that from the last part of the Samanid period [tenth century] all of the military governors of Khorasan, Balkh, and Iraq were "Iltashes," "Atabeqs," "Arslans," and "Sebuktagins."<sup>49</sup> In any case, even if these were not deliberate acts, there can be no question that this search for helpful allies for the day of confrontation with the totality of Islam had begun

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city found itself on the route of one of the branches of an important avenue of trade during the Mongol period, on a route which went from Hormoz to Kerman, Yazd, Kashan, Soltaniyya, and Tabriz and from there to the Mediterranean. Hamdallah Mostawfi in 740 A.H. [1340/41 C.E.] visited Abarqu. Towards the end of the 15th century C.E. [9th A.H.] the discovery of a sea route to India by the Portuguese rendered this famous route obsolete. The caravansaries, houses, and mosques of Abarqu went to ruin and the attack of the Afghans in 1135 A.H. [1722 C.E.] so destroyed the city that today the name "Abarqu" is synonymous with the most forgotten spots in the country.

<sup>49</sup> [Turkish names and titles.]

many years before the construction of the turrets and walls of the mercantile houses of Genoa and Venice.<sup>50</sup> One westerner writes in this regard:

The historical importance of the Christianity of the Turks is very great. We know that the province of Soghd in which the western Turks had settled from 565 A.D. onward was one of the biggest centers of the Nestorian Church. It is from this region and also from the province of Balkh that Nestorian missionaries set out to convert Asia to Christianity . . . . It appears that around the year 100 A.D. Nestorian missionaries had completed the conversion of the stragglers of the central Asian turkic tribes. These tribes consisted of the Onguts of Inner Mongolia, the Kerayit of central Mongolia, and the Naiman of western Mongolia. Not even taking into account that the Uigurs on the Gobi had been Christianized long before, one cannot portray the half-Christianized face of the empire of Ghengis Khan without paying attention to the Nestorian beliefs of all of the western Turks who wielded swords in his army.<sup>51</sup>

In this connection, it does not come as any surprise to me, nor do I consider to be an accident, that the world of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries (thirteenth and fourteenth C.E.) suddenly found itself facing danger on two fronts: the half-Christianized Mongols from the east and the Christian Crusaders from the west.

And in this way Marco Polo and his ilk enter the ring:

The Europeans of the 14th and 15th centuries who fought against the Ottomans, discovered the western shores of Africa, sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, battled with Muslims in the Indian Ocean, and who entertained the false notion that on the other side of the ocean they would

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<sup>50</sup> When Hasan II, "Jalal al-Din Hasan" discovered that the Mongols were coming . . . out of fear he sent an envoy to France to get help from the "people of the book" to get rid of the infidels. But the "people of the book" had no appetite for it and his envoy gave up on the French and crossed the channel and went to England, bearing the same message . . . . The envoy arrived at the English court in 636 A.H. [1239/40 C.E.]. Mathew Paris, the English historian, gives an account of the lamentable meeting of the envoy with the English king in his own history. The archbishop of Winchester who was present at the meeting gave the following answer to the king's request for advice:

Let these dogs fight amongst themselves and swallow one another. We shall finish off the survivors when we go and fight the enemies of Christendom . . .

(Quoted from the article "Mah va aftab" by Mehrdad Samadi, pp. 65-66 in *Ketab-e hafta*, no. 14, Mehr 1342.)

<sup>51</sup> *La Face de l'Asie*, René Grousset (Paris: Payot, 1962) pp. 55 [?]

find their old ally against the Muslims, namely, the leader of the Mongols — all of them were the militant grandchildren of the first Crusaders.<sup>52</sup>

You see that the issue is very clear.

The third point: the Crusaders of Europe who had mounted their horses to sack the Islamic world came from all over Europe, from Sweden to Rome. And all of them had writs from His Holiness, the Pope, as well as the money, provisions, horses, and fodder of the merchant houses of Genoa and Venice behind them. And who were their opponents? Who represented the world of Islam? Not all the Islamic kingdoms, only the Mamluks of Egypt, the far flung creatures of a Caliphate which was about to disappear. It is hard to believe that Sa'di as a volunteer for the holy war with the infidels was taken captive to dig ditches at Tripoli. Those days, on this side of the Islamic world, no one took the trouble to see the dangers and stop the childish feuding of the petty dynasts<sup>53</sup> or took the trouble (in trying to defeat one's debate opponent) to ignore controversies about the createdness or uncreatedness of the Koran. (Not to mention the fact that the raids of the Mongols had so completely devastated the Islamic world that there was not even an arena left in which someone could stand and fight.) It was in such times that Marco Polo (ostensibly for trade, but in reality on a mission for the Pope) crossed the length and breadth of this devastated area saying, "Now, whose is the kingdom,"<sup>54</sup> and went to congratulate the Great Khan who had smoothed the way for the influence of Venetian merchants so well. The most immediate result of this Venetian's journey was the genesis of silk and spice routes which in turn allowed the palazzi of Venice to become the scene for *Romeo and Juliet*.

As a result of the endeavors of the Ilkhanids and the merchants of Venice, two great routes opened up. One was the Armenia Major (Tabriz, Khoy, Manzikert, Erzurum, Trabzon) and the other, the Lesser Armenia (Tabriz, Erzurum, Sivas, Eskandarun . . .<sup>55</sup> But the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans and the fall of Byzantine rule in the year 857 A.H. (1453 C.E.) again cut these newly secured routes, and Christian Europe which had grown accustomed to the riches of the East got busy searching for another route. It was as a direct consequence of that search that America was discovered, and,

<sup>52</sup> *Tarikh-e tamaddon-e gharb va mabani-e an dar sharq* [The History of the Civilization of the West, and its Roots in the East] tr. by Parviz Daryush (Tehran, 1338) p. 33 [This passage was not found in the original *Civilization in the West*, Crane Brinton (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1964).]

<sup>53</sup> [*Moluk-e Tava'ef*, literally "the kings of the tribes," applied to the multitude of kings in Muslim Spain.]

<sup>54</sup> [i.e., "It belongs to me." The phrase *leman al-Molk* is taken from Koran XL, 16.]

<sup>55</sup> "Motala'ati dar bab-e Bahrayn va jazayer va savahel-e Khalij-e Fars" [Studies on Bahrein and the Islands and Shores of the Persian Gulf], 'Abbas Eqbal (Tehran: s.n., 1328) p. 50.

later, that the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope was made possible. Exactly fifty-three years after the conquest of Constantinople and fourteen years after the founding of Safavid rule (891 A.H. = 1486 C.E.), Bartholomeu Dias sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, and, five years later, Vasco da Gama reached warm waters by the same route and landed in Malabar. Seven years later, Albuquerque took the capital of the Amirs of Hormoz with his cannon and settled on the straits of the Persian Gulf,<sup>56</sup> so that he could afterwards drive the first nail of imperialism into Goa (the place which after 500 years has only recently been pried loose).

All of these events are by themselves historical events. But the West has always been thinking of ways of using them to its advantage. The last point which I would like to bring up in this regard is that even if one of the basic reasons behind the Mongol invasion of the Islamic world was not the previous groundwork laid by Christianity in the far off deserts of Ghur, at least in the attack of Timur on our part of the world, we find many traces of the instigation of a Europe stalled in the Crusades and requiring the goods of eastern markets. I will not try to support this statement by looking into western sources, for they are extremely circumspect. Instead it is better to thumb through the pages of our own works to be able to see the stupidity and blindness more.

Ebn Khaldun who, towards the end of his life, saw and spoke with Timur, writes:

... when I was in the Maghreb, I had heard many predictions concerning his [Timur's] appearance. Astrologers who used to discuss the conjunction of the two superior planets were awaiting the tenth conjunction of the trigon, which was expected to occur in the year 66 of the seventh century. One day, in the year [7]61, I met in Fez in the Mosque of al-Qarawiyin the preacher of Constantine, Abu 'Ali ebn Badis, who was an authority on this subject. I asked him about this conjunction which was to occur, and its implications. He answered me, 'It points to a powerful one who would arise in the northeast region of a desert people, tent dwellers, who will triumph over kingdoms, overturn governments, and become the masters of most of the inhabited world.' I asked, 'When is it due?' He said, 'In the year [7]84; accounts of it will be widespread.'

Ebn Zarzar, the Jewish physician and astrologer of Ebn Alfonso, the king of the Franks, wrote to me similarly.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *Jazira-ye kharg*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>57</sup> "Ebn Khaldun va Taymur-e Lang" [Ebn Khaldun and Timurlane] tr. by Sa'id Nafisi and Nushin Dokht Nafisi (Tehran, n.d.) p. 57 [*Ebn Khaldun and Timurlane*, Walter J. Fischel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952) pp. 35-36]

Observe that the spreaders of these reports are a preacher from Constantinople (which had just been conquered by the Ottomans) and a Jewish doctor from the court of the Franks! Don't you think then that we are perhaps right (from this direct evidence) in recognizing the historical truth that [in the time of Timur] the dregs of the Mongols had not yet sufficiently broken the spirit of Islam. And in the West people were always dreaming of another bogey of a tyrant who would come and finally pin this champion to the ground. If you are still in doubt, recall that not one spark from the Mongol conflagration and destruction or likewise from Timur's butchery ever touched the edge of the Christian world. And if Russia was punished a bit [during these invasions] it was for the crime of being Orthodox and not submitting to the Holy Father in Rome. And if you are still in doubt, observe that exactly fifty years after the conquest of Constantinople by the Muslims, Safavid rule was established in Ardabil,<sup>58</sup> i.e., right behind the Ottomans: the best place to plunge the dagger into us! Are you aware that at Chalderan and in the massacres committed on both sides in their respective realms the blood of almost 500,000 Muslims was spilled?<sup>59</sup>

Do not think that I am trying to defend the Ottomans. By no means. Let me say that we Middle Easterners have fallen on such hard times as a direct result of their bloody local wars, which were devoid of the heroic, and as a result of the shortage of new blood which they brought about. I would like to know if our bearded historians are right in defending the Safavid policy of religious schism. It is probably true that if the Ottomans had been victorious or if the Safavids had not marched under the banner of Shi'ism, we today

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<sup>58</sup> The crowning of Shah Esma'il was in 907 A.H. [1501 C.E.] and the conquest of Constantinople in 857 [1451 C.E.]. And yet another historical event:

The wife of Uzun Hasan was the daughter of Kalo Ioannes and the sister of David, the last Emperor of Trabzon. Her name was Despina Katarina. . . The marriage produced one son and three daughters. One of these daughters who was married to Soltan Haydar was called Marta. This woman was the mother of Shah Esma'il and the daughter of Katharina Despina, the Greek Christian.

(quoted from the article "Uzun Hasan" by Doctor 'Abd al-Hosayn Nava'i [*Mahnama-ye Farhang*, no. 4, 1341] p. 43.

<sup>59</sup> "The revival of Iranian nationalism on the basis of Shi'ism was not only reinforced from within, but also from without; the intransigence of the Ottomans who called Shiism heresy helped. Sultan Selim I carried things so far that he announced that the killing of one Shiite had as much otherworldly reward as killing 70 Christians. On the basis of this order 40,000 Shiites in the Ottoman empire were massacred in the space of several days." (*La Face de l'Asie*, p. 112).

Let us also not forget that twice that amount of Sunnis were killed in Iran. I am sad to report that recently I heard that they destroyed the Mazar-e Shohada' [tomb of the martyrs], a public graveyard for Iranian military leaders who fought in the battle of Chalderan, and as usual they have placed a "modern school" on the site.

would probably have been just another province of the Ottoman empire. But is it not just as true that today we are just another puppet state of the West? And is it not also true that from the beginning of the Islamic movement until six or seven centuries afterwards we played the same role. While ostensibly we were one of the provinces of the Baghdad Caliphate (in the guise of being a part of an Islamic totality), what share in the Islamic World did we have? And again, is it not a fact that even in the darkest years of Omayyad domination, we, relying on our identity as a people and the Iranian style which we lent to Islam, carried the black banner of the Abbasids from Khorasan to Baghdad. We so Iranized Islamic civilization that even today inexperienced orientalisists are stymied when trying to determine what percentage of the components of Islamic civilization are non-Iranian.

The purpose of this discussion is to allow us to become more broad-minded and to see what misfortunes lay in store for the East as a result of those divisive policies and of that bloody, unheroic, and useless warfare, which spread with the help of the machinations of the religious establishment of the time and the approving Christian ambassadors of Europe who promoted conflict between Shi'ite and Sunnite. For all of us whom the Westerners call the "Middle East"! And today how we suffer from a chronic lack of new blood, our inheritance from that time! And just look at how a western writer fills himself up with pride and deflates us as he describes the divisive and debilitating politics of the East. Indeed, the same Monsieur René Grousset maintains:

It was thus that Iran found its place among the great, leading nations of the world. The first reason was the ties between the court at Isfahan and the Mongol Great Khan on the one hand, and the Western powers on the other. These ties, especially with the West, have tremendous importance from the point of view of world history, for, in direct contrast to the Ottoman empire, they have turned Iran into a natural ally of the Christian world. And it is because of Iran's historical mission, that the great European travelers of the 17th century set out for the court at Isfahan; first the Sherley brothers, the amazing English adventurers who later became the personal friend of Shah 'Abbas, and later Tavernier and Chardin. . .<sup>60</sup>

Now let me again turn the pen over to Ebn Khaldun so that I will not be accused of "always complaining about foreigners, etc. . ." About Timur's character he says:

Some know him to be a man of mystical pursuits and others feel he is a

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<sup>60</sup> *La Face de l'Asie*, pp. 116-17.

Shi'ite. The latter feel this way because they have seen that he finds the descendants of 'Ali to be superior.<sup>61</sup>

You see that the schismatic undertone had begun long before the Safavids. And what did this "Shi'ite" Timur actually do? He once again so devastated the Islamic world that not a vineyard nor a vintner remained.<sup>62</sup> Whereas the Mongol Khan Hülegü in 657 [1258 C.E.] smothered the last 'Abbasid caliph in a rug for fear of earthquakes and divine wrath, this second "strong man," Timur, placed the last of the Seljuqs of Turkey, Bayazid Yildirim<sup>63</sup> into a cage and displayed him like a tiger for the amusement of the Christians. After these events, the world of the petty Islamic dynasts of the eighth century was in such a complete state of panic, destruction, and stagnation that the Safavids did not even have to resort to killing to establish their legitimacy.

The purpose of all this analysis is not to cry about the past or to boast of our own heroism or to say: "I am the one Rustam who was a hero of Sistan."<sup>64</sup> The point is to find out how the worm actually got into the tree. How Sa'di, exactly one year before the murder of the last Caliph of Baghdad, in the very midst of the Mongol pillaging could say:

In that period when times were gay,  
Six hundred and fifty-six years had gone away.<sup>65</sup>

Or how Ebn Khaldun, a man who covered the entire western Islamic world as judge, minister, and secretary to the Muslim Amirs and who wrote such a great work on the philosophy of history, surrendered to "destiny." How he became so discouraged by and fed up with the internal squabbling of the Muslim Amirs of Andalus that, along with those fortune tellers, he pinned his hopes on the coming of another Nebuchadnezzar who would put the world in order. Even though this would be achieved through devastation.

<sup>61</sup> *Ebn Khaldun va Taymur-e Lang*, p. 73.

<sup>62</sup> A saying signifying complete obliteration.

<sup>63</sup> [His name means "lightning bolt."]

<sup>64</sup> [A proverb referring to unearned and boastful glories.]

<sup>65</sup> [656 years after the flight of the Prophet = 1258.]

## IV. The First Signs of Decay

It was thus, that at the same time the Renaissance dawned in the West, the mania of a medieval inquisition reared its head and the cauldron of religious disputes and wars was stirred in the Middle East. We have seen how this part of the world was emptied of rich caravans, and for this reason was forced to crawl into impoverished isolation and pseudo-mysticism. Thus, in the words of Dr. Fardid, we began right where the West left off. As the West rose we fell; the West woke up during its industrial renaissance, while we fell into a prolonged hibernation. Let us admit that we play the same kinds of ideological games in our present period of "enlightenment" that the West began in the eighteenth century. While we had our constitutional movement in the beginning of this century, Europe was gravitating toward socialism and the leading ideological currents in economics, politics and culture.

Pick up and leaf through the travelers' accounts of all of those people who, throughout the Safavid period, came here as tourists, merchants, ambassadors, or military advisers (mostly Jesuits<sup>66</sup>) and see what encouraging and patient witnesses they were to the settlement of the tribes! How they welcomed the great slaughter carried out by Shah 'Abbas or how they reveled in Sultan Hosayn's lack of spunk! It is exactly from that time onwards that we began to crave the praise of foreign spectators who were in fact the primary instructors of our military and our men of state, during these last 300 years. And all of their praise and bravos are like the fairy tales told to tired old night watchmen so that they will sleep while thieves are busy robbing their caravans.

These are the basic sources of the flood of westitis. Unfortunately our ears are still tuned to the conniving cries and praise of the agents of foreign

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<sup>66</sup> Their names are listed in a *tumar* [document], and the best source for information on all of them is *Zendagi-e Shah 'Abbas* [The Life of Shah Abbas] by Nasrallah Falsafi which was published in three volumes. The interesting thing is that the primary and biggest source of Orientalist knowledge are these same travelers accounts and most Orientalists were themselves the disciples of the narrators of these accounts! Read Falsafi's book and you will know what I am talking about.

governments who, once every several years, come here in the guise of orientalists, ambassadors, or advisers and turn out debilitating decrees confirming our courage and resolution. And we are the same people who, from the time of Anushirvan, had had delusions of grandeur and had become infatuated with polite formalities. It was as a result of this new type of tourism that foreigners became acquainted with our nature and habits and learned just how to keep us impoverished and how to make loans to us and, later, to take control of our customs houses. Or how to break the Safavid monopoly on silk with the competition of their own markets and later, after they had gotten a foothold here, how, by means of the Afghan tribes, to relieve themselves of the aged Safavid warrior who was beginning to frighten people as much as a scarecrow. Next it was Nader [Shah]'s turn. He blindly attacked India just at the time when the East India Company (that is, western imperialism) was about to set up shop in the southern part of the continent and it became necessary for the court of Mohammad Shah in northern India to be kept busy. The affair of Turkomanchay<sup>67</sup> (1243 A.H., 1828 C.E.) which was the last roar of this ambushed paper tiger followed Nader's destruction. Then came the saga of Herat Wars (1273 A.H., 1857 C.E.), the coup de grace of which was the siege of Bushire. This is how they finally threw the corpse of this warrior to the ground. In the last 50 or 60 years oil showed up on our horizon and we again found something to justify our existence. As a direct result of our recent quiescent history, the fate of our politics, economy, and culture went directly into the hands of the companies and western nations which backed them. From the time of the Constitutional Revolution, our clergy who were the last line of defense against the foreign onslaught, had retreated so deeply into their shells in the face of the preliminary wave of mechanization and had shut out the outside world to such an extent and had woven cocoons around themselves so well, that only the Day of Judgment could rouse them. They kept on retreating, step by step.

The hanging of the spiritual leader who favored "the rule of the *Shari'at*" in the Constitutional movement was in itself an indication of this retreat.<sup>68</sup> I agree with Dr. Tondar Kiya who wrote that Shaikh Nuri was not hanged as an opponent of the Constitutional movement (for in the beginning he was in fact

<sup>67</sup> [This treaty ended a war with Russia which started when Iran attacked Russian possessions in Transcaucasia. As part of the Treaty of Turkomanchay, Russia secured part of Armenia and Iran recognized Russia's exclusive right to have a navy on the Caspian Sea and granted Russia commercial concessions.]

<sup>68</sup> [Al-e Ahmad is referring to Shaikh Fazlallah Nuri (hanged July 31, 1909). According to E. G. Browne (*Persian Revolution*, Cambridge, 1966, p. 148), Shaikh Nuri denounced the constitutionalists as "atheists, free thinkers, Babis, etc." His opposition was responsible for stirring up reactionary mobs against attempts at constitutional reform.]

a defender of it), but as a proponent of “the rule of the *Shari‘at*”<sup>69</sup> and, I will add, as a defender of the integrity of Shi‘ism. It was for this reason that in the wake of his death everyone was waiting for a writ to be issued from Najaf. And this was going on at a time when the leader of our west-stricken intelligentsia, Malkom Khan,<sup>70</sup> was a Christian and Talebof<sup>71</sup> was a social democrat from the Caucasus. In any case, from that day on we were marked with the brand of westitis. I consider the corpse of that great man [Nuri] hanging from the gallows, to be a banner bearing the emblem of the final victory of westitis over this country after 200 years of struggle.

Today we stand under that banner, a people alienated from themselves; in our clothing, shelter, food, literature, and press. And more dangerous than all, in our culture. We educate pseudo-westerners and we try to find solutions to every problem like pseudo-westerners.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> I am quoting freely from the *Biography of Shaikh Nuri* by Tondar Kiya. See the introduction to the latest issue of *Shahin* (Tehran, 1335), pp. 319–321.

<sup>70</sup> [Mirza Malkom Khan was an opponent of the Qajar king Naser al-Din Shah and oversaw the publication of an anti-Qajar newspaper *Qanun* (Law) while in exile in London. Some writers contend that Malkom Khan’s close ties with the British and his religion (Armenian Christian) make his calls for local reform seem suspect.]

<sup>71</sup> [Mirza ‘Abd al-Rahim Talebof Tabrizi was educated in Tiflis and was one of the first Iranian writers to use a simplified literary Persian in translations and original works. He was a prolific antimonarchist who called for constitutional government in Iran in many of his writings.]

<sup>72</sup> See the article “Taskhir-e tamaddon-e Farhangi” [The Domination of Foreign Civilization] by Sayyed Fakhr al-Din Shadman (Tehran, 1326). The author is a far better writer than I and, years before the writing of these pages, tried to find a cure for “westernization” [*fokoli-mabi*, lit., “being like the *faux col* wearers”]. He suggested a serious education in our mother tongue and the translation of philosophical, scientific, and literary works of the West. Even though he was well-acquainted with the disease, his prescription proved ineffective, because thousands of foreign books have been translated from that time until now, and we have read each one of these as a mine of western information, but we still grow more like “*faux col* wearers” each day. We do this because this “*faux col* wearing,” or as I call it “prissiness,” is itself a clear symptom of a larger ailment which is west-strickenness. Perhaps the person who, before all others, pointed the way to the basic cause of the problem was Dr. Mohammad Baqer Hushyar who, although known as a Baha‘i, in 1327 [1948] wrote the following:

Through a crack in the door, you have seen how all Europeans are literate, but you do not see how well-entrenched their traditional culture is, and you do not know that their entire educational establishment from the primary grades to the university is based on the Church. You have by means of the western intelligentsia and in your overzealousness destroyed this foundation in your own country.

From the article “Amuzesh-e hamagani va rayegan” [Free Public Education] in *Amuzesh va parvaresh* (Tehran, 1327).

If, at the onset of the Constitutional Period, the danger was imminent, it has now become part of our very beings. From the villager who escaped to the city and would not return to his village because his local, itinerant barber does not have the right kind of shampoo or the village is without a cinema or he cannot buy a sandwich there — to the cabinet minister who is sensitive to dirt and grime and therefore travels twelve months out of the year to every corner of the world. And why have things reached such a state? Because the two or three generations of Iranians who came after the events of the Constitutional Period have now entered the limelight and have become teachers, cabinet ministers, lawyers, directors general, and, except for the doctors, not one of them is skilled in any trade at all. All of them, even if they were not completely relying on the foppish antics of their youth which they spent in Paris and London and Berlin, were, at least, only harkening to the three epistles of Aqa Khan Kermani<sup>73</sup> addressed to Jalal al-Dawla and to the other types of westitis at the beginning of the Constitutional Period by Malkom Khan, Talebof and others. . .<sup>74</sup> As far as I can tell these Iranian “Montesquieus” had their own solutions to the problem. Although they all probably agreed on this one point and willy-nilly realized that the basic structure of our society and traditions would not be able to withstand the unavoidable onslaught of the machine and technology they all accepted the wrong notion of “adopting Western civilization without Iranian modification.”<sup>75</sup> Yet beyond this general, unsubstantiated formula each one in order to find a cure for the disease, followed a different path. One group offered his services to foreign embassies as sources of cultural nourishment. Another, trying to imitate the West, felt that a new Lutheranism was in order and that the old faith could gain new life through religious reform. The third called for Islamic unity at a time when the Ottomans were disgracing themselves before the world with their massacres of Armenians and Kurds. (You will pardon my discretion here; this is not the place for complete candor.)

<sup>73</sup> [Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani is known as a liberal reformer who was active in the last part of the reign of Naser al-Din Shah (ruled 1848-96). It is also known that he openly doubted the usefulness of the clergy in a constitutional revolution. The text reads *seh maktub* “three letters of Kermani” instead of “epistles.”]

<sup>74</sup> Read the treatises *Eslam, Akhond, va Hatef al-Gheyb*, *Haftad o do Mellat*, *Resalaye yak Kalma*, *Siyasat-e Talebi*, and *Siyahatnama-ye Ebrahim Baeg*, as well as most of the [works of] missionaries of westernism and destroyers of superstition in the name of religion. In my opinion, they were the ones who smoothed the way for westitis. [Jalal al-Dawla was a Qajar prince who opposed the monarchy during the first part of this century.]

<sup>75</sup> These are the very words of Malkom Khan from his collected works edited by Mohit Tabataba'i (Tehran, 1327). See also *Fikr-e azadi* [The Idea of Freedom] by Feridun Adamiyat (Tehran, 1340) in which he, with that special skill of his, condemns one group of Freemasons and exonerates another. In my opinion, the Freemasons are all cut from the same cloth.

At the outset of the Constitutional Period, the basic defect in the actions of our leaders (both those for and against the movement) was the fact that Islam, i.e., the rule of the *Shari'at*, still provided the comprehensive totality that could act as a protector or a dam against the influence of machines and the West. It was for this reason that some rose up to defend religion and others attacked it. For the same reason "Constitutional Law" and "the rule of the *Shari'at*" came to represent the two contrary notions of "religion" and "ir-religion." I feel therefore that these men all approached the problem from the wrong end. Although, had we been living in those times, we would probably have repeated the idiocies of the two factions and would not be around today to judge them so harshly. Those men, after all, lived closer to the time when Mirza Bozorg Shirazi could with a simple writ seal the fate of the British tobacco concession and demonstrate how much of a power base and a threat the clergy was. At the beginning of the Constitutional Movement, in any case, all of those fine men were unaware that years before in Europe the god Know-how had taken its lofty seat above the stock exchanges and banks. It had proclaimed its sovereignty and would never tolerate another God. It merely laughed at all the world's customs and ideologies. This then was the way that the Constitutional Movement, as the advance guard of mechanization, destroyed the clergy. Thereafter theological schools were (in the twenty-year period) banished to one or two cities in the country. The clergy's influence on the workings of the judicial system and in parish recordkeeping was diminished and wearing ecclesiastic robes was forbidden. The clergy, on the other hand, in the face of all this pressure not only remained silent, but continued to be wrapped up in the petty details of prayer, or the problems of ritual purity or continued to be paralyzed by nagging doubts: Did they perform the right number of prostrations or not? The only thing they accomplished was to proscribe radio and television which had found such a wide audience that nothing could stand in their way. In fact they could have and should have been trying to arm themselves with their enemies' weapons and from their own transmitters in Qom and Mashhad (Vatican-style) challenge the westitis of the official and semi-official media. Confidentially, if the clergy had known what a gold mine of revolutionary opposition to the rule of the "tyrannous and unrighteous" they kept alive in people with the principle "no constraint to obey those in authority"; if they were able to show the true nature of "those in authority" to the people with the media (newspapers, radio, television, film, etc.) and specifically document their general charges; and if they were able, through contact with international councils of clergy, to give their cause a certain amount of dynamism, then they would never have been so preoccupied with petty details. This only resulted in their being totally uninformed and their remaining on the sidelines of political life.<sup>76</sup> Let me go on. Allow me to

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<sup>76</sup> In the interval between the first and second printing of this volume, a book was

mention, for example, the role that just one oil company has played in our politics and society during the last 60 years and then abandon these historical discussions.

The oil concession was given in the first year of the twentieth century by the Qajar king to William Knox D'Arcy, who later sold his rights to the famous company. We were embroiled in the Constitutional Revolution from 1906 on! And where was the territory covered by the contract? The southwestern foothills of the Bakhtiari mountains. The remains of the first oil well can still be found in Masjed-e Solayman. It was necessary to keep the southwestern edge of the Bakhtiari Mountains clear of the winter migrations of the Bakhtiari tribe, so that they could drill the first oil well easily and dig into the mountains and plains of Masjed-e Solayman. This caused the Bakhtiari tribe<sup>77</sup> to move so that they, with the help of freedom fighters from Tabriz and Rasht, could march on Tehran. And if our Constitutional Revolution is half-baked, it is because the "khans" rose up in support of a revolutionary

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published with the title *Marja'iyat va rawhaniyyat* [Religious Authority and the Clergy] (Tehran, 1341). It contains all the accustomed verbosity of the clergy, but it also reveals a relatively good appreciation of these problems and responsibilities and of possible solutions. See especially the articles of M. Bazargan, professor at the University and Sayyed Mahmud Talaqani, the *emam* of the Hedayat Mosque, both of whom proposed, in place of one source of religious authority, a kind of holy writ-issuing council. And if we accept that his volume with all of its faults was a kind of presager of the events of the 15th of Khordad 1342 [the boody Moharram riots of the early summer of 1963], I can now, one year later, find the boldness to inform the leaders of the religious establishment that:

A. If the clergy continued to ignore their own principles (one of which I mentioned);

B. If they remain satisfied with the minutiae of religious life, proscribing this or that thing or person; and

C. If they continue to forget that Shi'ism with its principles of *ejtehad* [application of judgment in religious matters] and issuing writs is much better able to deal with new developments than Sunnism (in spite of the fact that the writ concerning women's freedom was issued by Shaikh Mohammad Shaltut, the head of al-Azhar, not Shi'ite divines) — in any case if the clergy, taking into account the conditions of the time, cannot break out of those early Constitutional Period cocoons, we have no choice but to accept the fact that this last barricade against west-strickenness has lost its vitality and turned into some fossilized remain which belongs in a museum, or, at best, has become the last refuge of the country's reactionary forces.

<sup>77</sup> Remember that among the stockholders in the British Petroleum Company were the chief, Asa'd Bakhtiari, as well as Moshir al-Dawla (Nasrallah Khan). And if they rubbed out this Sardar Asa'd in the time of Reza Shah, do you not think that he, like Shaikh Khaz'al who had territorial claims in Khuzestan, had claims in the oil rich winter grounds of the Bakhtiaris and was causing problems for the government? Again it is just like the case of the Hayat Davudis [a people living on the Persian Gulf] who had claims on Kharg Island and were executed because of this. To find out more about these matters see *Talaye Siah ya bala-ye Iran* [Black Gold or the Bane of Iran] by Abu al-Fazl Lesani.

movement which in essence undermines the rule of khans. We were thus embroiled in the issues of the constitution and tyranny until World War I broke out. But meanwhile, the company had reached its oil, and the British Admiralty which became the official concessionnaire was now assured of an oil supply. You see that I am not writing history, I am extrapolating from it; and very hastily too. You will have to look up the actual events in the history books yourself.

Later, around the year 1300 (1920 C.E.), the war had ended and the owners of the company were now the victors and the engines of war had run out of steam. Consequently, the international consumption of oil was down, and the company was forced to find customers locally. It became necessary for a strong central government to be in power to make the roads safe and clear impediments so that the oil trucks could travel easily to Quchan, Khoy, and Makran. In every little hamlet, a gas station had to be built. And more important than these developments was the fact that, since the concessionaire was now the British Admiralty, there was no tolerance for internal disputes and for bargaining with the khans, the parliament, and the press; it only wanted to deal with one man. Hence we had the coup d'état of 1299 [1920], military government followed by dictatorship, the forced settlement of the Kurds, the suppression of "Semitqu"<sup>78</sup> and the elimination of Shaikh Khaz'al who, had he behaved a bit more intelligently, could have become like one of the Shaikhs of the Persian Gulf Emirates.

In 1311 (1932 C.E.), the D'Arcy concession was more than half over and was slowly starting to run out. The principal concessionaire, the British Admiralty (i.e., the British government) had to use the existing centralized power, where one man spoke for everything from the parliament and the cabinet to the army and the gendarmerie, in order to renew the concession while the iron was hot. Taqizada<sup>79</sup> once again assumed his role as a "puppet" and the parliament went through the charade of first voting to cancel the D'Arcy concession and then moving to reinstate it. They did this with such fanfare, that even the elders of the nation did not suspect that there was something going on. Or if they did suspect, they did not say anything about it. For we did not see any of them even lamenting what was happening and thereby removing the stain of history's condemnation from their records. Except afterwards, after matters settled down and in the years following the Shahrivar of 1941 when every ass of a person was called to account. Of course such an ugly truth had to be decorated with camouflage in style with the times.

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<sup>78</sup> [Esma'il Semitqu was the leader of a group of Kurds who rebelled in western Azerbaijan, and was killed by government forces in 1929.]

<sup>79</sup> [Sayyed Hasan Taqizada, a noted scholar, was the first member of the constitutional assembly from Tabriz. After Reza Shah's abdication, he became Iran's ambassador to England.]

That means the reality had to be covered up. How? By threatening people with beatings, they forced them to dress the same, removing the pressed felt hats from the men and the veils from the women. This was done in the name of the latest development in civilization! They constructed a nationwide rail network, not with oil revenues but with revenues from the tax on sugar! What is more, the biggest reason for this railway was to get help behind the Stalingrad front during World War II.

Then came the year 1320 (1941 C.E.) and Europe was again at war. There was the danger of Rashid 'Ali Gilani<sup>80</sup> and the government's flirtation with the Axis powers as it tried to demonstrate maturity, but actually succeeded in betraying its senility. After all, even if they cannot stand each other, cows kept in the same barn eventually begin to smell alike. Of course this is no laughing matter. We have all seen what kind of situation came next. All of the authority, majesty, military power, the security forces, and gendarmerie [of Reza Shah] fell apart one day. Of course if a Napoleon was satisfied with being exiled on Sainte-Hélène, it is obvious that an Iranian emperor could put up with the Mauritius. After the Allies, it was America's turn; America, which long before World War I had sprung to life and was "compelled" to have its gunboats refuel in the Persian Gulf. If you were in their place would you pay for fueling ships involved in the victory over Fascism (i.e., the salvation of Russia and England) with dollars out of your own pockets? Paid to British Petroleum at that! The context for American intervention in the matter of the southern oil fields comes into being right here; especially in the Azerbaijan affair. It was American political clout which eventually prodded the United Nations into action and forced the Soviet Russians to evacuate. Inevitably there was unrest again, cries for liberty, and talk of a northern oil concession as well. In a way, these were scarecrows, guarding fiefs that the British did not want to hand over to America. And this brief liberty lasted until 1329 (1951 C.E.), when the oil was nationalized and America checked the British, and the pawns, one after another, changed hands. One had to be destroyed, the other checkmated so that American capital could hold 40 percent of the shares of the Oil Consortium — exactly the percentage that the British Admiralty had! And this is the story of the revolt of the 28th of Mordad, 1332 (1954 C.E.).

This is what is called cooperation in politics and economics, i.e., following the directives of the oil companies and the western countries. This is the ultimate symptom of westitis in our time. In this way western industry plunders us, rules us, and determines our fate. It is obvious that when national economic and political autonomy is given to foreign companies they determine what to sell and what not to sell. Of course the best thing for these companies, which want to be permanent sellers of their goods, is to make sure

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<sup>80</sup> [In 1941 Rashid 'Ali (Gilani) was the pro-German leader of an independent government in Kordestan. He was later exiled.]

that consumers are never able to do without them. God keep the oil flowing! They get the oil and, in return, they give you whatever you desire, from pigeon's milk to human soul, — even wheat. This mandatory exchange of goods occurs also on a cultural level in language and literature. Pick up and thumb through any of our so-called serious literary journals. Where is there anything about this part of the world? Or about the East as a whole? About India or Japan or China? They are all filled with reports about the Nobel prizes, about the Papal elections, about Françoise Sagan, the Cannes film prizes, the latest Broadway play, and the newest film from Hollywood. As for the illustrated weeklies, what can I say? And if this is not westitis, what is it?



## V. A Boatload of Paradoxes

And how have we ended up? Aping a tribe of foreigners, with unfamiliar customs and a culture which has no roots in our own cultural environment, let alone its being able to branch out in our everyday lives, our politics, and our culture. For this reason everything we possess is marred. And who exactly is this “we”? Some 19 or 20 million people of whom 75 percent live in villages or in tents and huts, with customs which go back to the dawn of creation, unaware of new values, condemned to live under the practices of feudalism, never exposed to machines, with primitive tools, food, fuel, clothing, and shelter (i.e., wooden ploughs, barley bread, cow dung, muslin, and thatched huts). The only things from the West which have penetrated these villages are the draft and the transistor radio, both of which are more harmful than dynamite.

Mechanization, to the extent that our *korsis* are replaced by kerosene stoves, is the first step. But in our villages they do not even know about coal, let alone kerosene! We who live in a country rich in oil and who try desperately to expand the consumption of oil have an annual per capita consumption rate of only 250 liters of petroleum.<sup>81</sup> (Even with the kinds of jalopies we have in our cities, cars which eat gas and then produce accidents. And with this amount of oil one could not even cook one *eshgana*<sup>82</sup> a day. Westitis necessitates that we subject our villages to the conditions which I outlined above, that we pelt them with the array of tractors which we are forced to buy with oil revenues. And what do these tractors do? They disrupt our ancestral boundaries and traditional organization. Just look at how much blood was shed because this “blind plow” of the twentieth century encroached upon the property of “Kal Abbas‘ali” from the land of “Kal Madvali”<sup>83</sup> by a few inches. I

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<sup>81</sup> The total consumption of petroleum products (excluding tar [asphalt] and drugs) in 1342 was 5 million metric tons. We divide this by 20 million and arrive at the figure 250 liters per year, i.e., half a liter or a little more per day.

<sup>82</sup> [*eshkana* or *eshgana* is a peasant dish made out of greens, onions, dough.]

<sup>83</sup> [Kal Abbas‘Ali and Kal Madvali are typical bumpkin names.]

have collected some notes for a novel on this kind of bloody confrontation and head-smashing in rural areas. Now in such conditions as these, land division has been recognized as the latest step on the road to development! Enlarging the class of small landowners will turn all plots of arable land into a spider's web of individual boundaries and tenure systems which will suffocate and immobilize each tractor in its strands. Come and see what fine graveyards the nation's farmlands have become for the rusted remains of these tractors, which have no repair shops for their maintenance; no boundless prairies nor wide open spaces so that they can be used effectively; and no roads so that they can be driven to the cities for repair. And with all this, the population of a village sits idle three months out of the year where they are prey to the cold, floods, droughts, and locusts. Who in the end must solve these problems?

About nine or ten percent of the population of an industrial country provides food for the entire population; we, on the other hand, have put 60 percent of our people in charge of the affairs of the stomach. In spite of this, every year we import wheat from America and sugar from Formosa — we who live in a supposedly agricultural country! And what exactly do those honorable peasants accomplish the nine months a year they are working on the land? They gather fodder, dry cow dung, bring the cows and sheep to pasture, and perform the ceremonies for the rain prayer. They lament: "This is not really work for a man! The radio says that in the city they're raking in the money every Wednesday!"<sup>84</sup> So let's go to the city!" In this way mobs of peasants flee from the villages and come to the cities. To cities, where the able bodied youths of the villages have been brought to serve in the military or in the households of the brass or in forced labor. To cities which keep the remaining 25 percent of the honorable citizenry safe from the ravages of time under its mud roofs and behind its thick, high walls. To townships which are for the most part inflated hamlets or, in the words of my friend Hosayn Malek, knots dotting the ropelike strands of our roads. In addition, each one of these cities is itself a fairgrounds for foreign manufactured products. You can still see the 50-year-line of the English Raleigh bicycle factory in Yazd; one month's production of the Mitsubishi factory in Torbat-e Haydariya; 10 years' production of Ford, Chevrolet, and Fiat in Tehran. At the same time, you cannot find butter in Kerman, and in Tabriz you have to eat Australian preserves. I have actually experienced this! We flee the villages to go to the sparse greenery of the cities. And for what? To guard cars for their owners, to sell lottery tickets, or, if we are really energetic, to dig ditches. And at what wages? At the peak of construction activity it runs about seven or eight tomans<sup>85</sup> a day — a wage which is given for one hour's work in industrialized countries.

<sup>84</sup> [Each Wednesday the results of a well-advertised lottery sponsored by Princess Ashraf were announced.]

<sup>85</sup> Roughly equivalent of one dollar.

While it is true that this form of urbanization is, in any case, expanding, when have you ever heard about an age in which cities were able to survive without villages? In this way, we will soon have piles of useless machines in place of cities and villages. Each one exactly like the junkyards of America and each pile the size of Tehran! After all, a car is not a small cannon, it cannot be loaded on the back of a mule and, as the tribe migrates, carried over hill and dale for protection and security. Even if you buy a Peugeot you still have to scratch out some shelter for it or the cold will burst your radiator. And besides, how will you pay off the installments? For this reason there are many drivers in the cities who sleep in hostels at two tomans a bed, while their taxis are parked in a garage at one toman a night. You have to bear in mind our climate.

The necessity of using machines brings on urbanization. And this urbanization as we have seen is an extension of being uprooted from the land. In order to migrate to the cities, you first have to be uprooted from your ancestral land or you have to flee the landlord's village or get tired of wandering around with the tribe and escape. And here lies the first paradox derived from our westitis. In order to answer the call of machine to urbanization, the rural people are uprooted so that they can migrate to the cities, where there is neither work for the new arrivals nor shelter; and at the same time the machine has also made its way to the villages. Although each machine takes the place of ten men or oxen in the village, it still needs someone to service it there. Someone skilled. And where do you find him? You see how messed up things are!

There are other paradoxes which arise out of this same westitis. Let me list them:

The first thing a city-dweller thinks about is his stomach, and after that is satisfied, the region below his stomach. In order to satisfy the second he must get his appearance in order.<sup>86</sup> When he was living in the village he had no access to the means for such things. For this reason, the primary source of a nouveau riche "bourgeoisie" are the food industry (sugar, biscuits, vegetable oil, compote, pasteurized milk), the building industry (cement, top quality brickworks, mosaic tiles, etc.), and the clothing industries (textiles, tricots!, Jeneral Mod,<sup>87</sup> etc.). All of this going on while we are such famine-stricken victims of chronic food shortages lasting several centuries, that even this is a step forward. A hunger-stricken person who has spent a lifetime eating bread

<sup>86</sup> "Precise statistics show that Iran ranks 16th in the world in the number of beauty parlors and hair stylists. In Tehran there are 2,200 licensed men's and women's hair dressers and 2500 unlicensed itinerant barbers. By comparison in London there are 4,200 men's and women's hair dressers and in Moscow 2,900 beauticians are employed. One can understand just how much importance the people of Tehran have attached to their physical appearance in the last several years." Quoted from the weekly *Ferdowsi* (21 Khordad, 1342).

<sup>87</sup> [Name of a well-known clothing store in Tehran.]

and yogurt in the village, will, in the city, fill his stomach with a sandwich, then go to a hairdresser and a tailor, then get his shoes shined and finally visit a whorehouse. Political parties and gatherings are forbidden, political clubs and the like are . . . what can I say? The mosques and the pulpit are almost obsolete and if not completely so, are only needed during the high holy days of Moharram and Ramazan. Taking the place of all these things are the cinemas<sup>88</sup> and television, and the press which everyday expose thousands of our honorable urban population to the antics of some movie star. And where is the food to feed all these people to come from? From the villages, the villages which have been emptied; where the cows have all been slaughtered, where the *qanats*<sup>89</sup> have been neglected; and the "number five" screw on the water pump of the deep well has snapped and the metal plough for the tractor has rusted and corroded and even after placing an order to the company, it will take one year before the parts are imported. You cannot feed the entire population of a city with powdered milk donated by America or wheat from Australia!

Another paradox is that urbanization requires security both in the cities and the villages. We have noticed that in addition to the fact that with urbanization villages are abandoned, most of them and many of the cities are in the path of tribal migrations, migrations which involve the trampling of farmland, open grazing, destroying irrigation streams, polluting qanats, stealing poultry, and, in sum, a lack of law and order. For this reason we are not even safe in our small cities, let alone the villages. And it is also for this reason that the people of this land, trusting no one, take refuge from the ravages of time behind their high mud walls with their code of "dissimulation"<sup>90</sup> and duplicity. Whereas at one time the high walls around our cities eliminated the need for walls around our houses, now that we have destroyed our city gates and walls to make way for highways — the thruways for bulldozers, tractors, and trucks — each house is forced to have a wall around it. And what high

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<sup>88</sup> The cinema in Iran has joined the ranks of narcotics and cigarettes as a means of avoiding problems, family life and relatives, schools, and sexual and other prohibitions. In Tehran alone the yearly cinema attendance is 33 million, and people spend 500 million rials on admission (*Majalla-ye masayel-e Iran*, Azar, 1342). In the article, "*Sinema va mardom az yakdigar che mikhvahand?*" [The Cinema and the People: What do they Want from One Another?] we find a few lines from the book *Ketab-e Iran* [The Book of Iran] which is a report by 16 American experts. Concerning this problem in 1957 they wrote:

In films a western-oriented Iranian finds the new civilization promised him in his modern education but denied to him in real life. For him the cinema is a form of escape from a society full of failure and a sanctuary for his dream world in which his western values are a reality.

<sup>89</sup> [an underground water channel]

<sup>90</sup> ["dissimulation" or *taqiyya*, choosing to hide one's true religion when the truth might cause bodily harm or financial loss for the believer]

walls! Our country is one of vast deserts and high walls. Mud walls in the villages and brick and cement in the cities. These walls are not just an external reality. Inside each of us there are such walls, stretching to the heavens. We all take refuge behind psychological walls made of pessimism, perverted ideas, mistrust, and blind individualism.

On the other hand, as I indicated, a newly arrived city-dweller or a villager has either escaped from a landlord or from a tribe or has purposely removed himself from the path of yearly tribal migration which brings with it its own form of covert theft. He has done this so that he can have a secure place. He is unaware of the fact that the tribal chief who comes to power 10 years later and establishes the "such and suchid" dynasty (refer to the histories of the "ils" not the "als") shall bestow<sup>91</sup> the same town or city in which he [i.e., the city-dweller or villager] has found refuge or the village which has just set up its *qanats* to some other khan. The cycle thus begins all over again. The last division of the *toyuls* occurred during the Constitutional Period and with these roving khans and tribes who are still with us, God only knows how long we will be plagued by the consequences: insecurity, destitution, pessimism, and despair about the future. In what age is all of this happening? In an age in which the machine has not only become the greatest khan and sits upon the khan of khan's throne, but also requires security, and calls for no boundaries and no walls, and demands simplicity (or rather simplemindedness), obedience, reliance on others, and trust in the future.

Another paradox is that once mechanization reaches the cities and villages, whether in the form of a motorized mill or a textile factory, it causes unemployment among workers in local industries. It causes the local mill to shut down. It renders the old spinning wheel useless. It causes the carpet and rug weaving and felt-making industries to shut down. And at the same time, there always has been a market for these local crafts and industries (carpets, rugs, mosaics, inlay, and canvas shoes [*giva*]); a market which was to an extent viable. But we are amazed and ask: "Why is the carpet market so dead?" "Why are our rug exports in danger?" We are unaware that this is only the beginning and, that, once the machine really finds its way into the villages, there will be other complications. I myself have seen all of the idled windmills between Qa'en and Gonabad which stand like useless demons in some obsolete myth, or like aged sentinels asleep at their posts near the cities and towns. In Dezful alone with all of its beautiful brickwork and model city-planning, I saw nearly 100 mills standing idle. Once the machine makes its appearance in a village, it completely destroys all of the relations between the pastoral and village economies (i.e., the existing local industries and handicrafts). And what could be better? Now the eyes, hands, and lungs of village children will not be ruined as they slave away at their looms to enable the wealthy to

<sup>91</sup> [lit., "give the *toyul*" or the right to tax-farm a particular area.]

decorate their villas. The greatest advantage of the advent of mechanization to the fields and villages lies not only in the compulsory dissolution of the feudal system and the end of migratory cultural patterns (tribalism and khanates), but also in either the total elimination of local industries and handicrafts, or, if there is some mechanism for their preservation, in an increase in their economic value. For, within the framework of a program of preservation, wages can be raised, new buyers can be found for the handicraft, the market for canvas shoes can be expanded, etc.

Another paradox: the tools of primitive life, everything from wooden ploughs, *korsis*, canvas shoes, and oil lamps to small sickles, spinning wheels, and frame looms, bring with them primitive modes of thought. Or, vice versa, belief in superstitions, banging on pots during eclipses, vows, talismans, and eye patches to ward off disease<sup>92</sup> and pests, all of these old wives tales,<sup>93</sup> they are all part of the same syndrome. Of course as soon as the machine appears, this type of thinking must go. But do not think it will happen just like that, because these primitive and superstitious people are the ones who are now invading the cities and becoming slaves to the machine, or who in those same villages are bulldozer and tractor drivers. Workers do not grow on trees nor do we import them along with the machines. In order for these people to receive modern (machine) training they must have at least a period of training. In spite of this I myself saw a bulldozer driver who hung a talisman from the steering wheel of his giant machine! Our taxis are full of these things. Our shops plastered with prayers, curses, and "this too shall pass" poetry and slogans like: "all that ye have shall only last but a minute." It is in such an environment that a man can suddenly become a gangster and rob a bank. A primitive man, having come to the city and committed himself to work with a machine, with his slow-wittedness, his laziness, and all of his deterministic beliefs, must keep up with the machine and react to what it does. This slave to fatalistic superstitions and to fortuneteller's views of the future, this man who eats scraps of paper adorned with vows and koranic formulas in his soup, must now deal with the car, which knows nothing of destiny and which does not brake faster or go more slowly because of his monthly sacrifice of a sheep. When he sees that his monthly sacrifices produce no tangible benefits and he keeps on having accidents, his ability to cope disappears. He gives up on everything, becomes a thief or a nihilist or an opportunist.

Another paradox: one of the necessary consequences of westitis is giving women their freedom. Apparently this comes about because we felt that we

<sup>92</sup> My brother-in-law, Manuchehr Daneshvar, on New Year's Day 1340 [March 21, 1961] witnessed a rain prayer in Aghajari, one of the oil producing centers! Each of the women held a kid in her hands and, looking towards the sky said, "God! We are sinners, so be it, but what have these defenseless animals done?"

<sup>93</sup> [original text reads "the ideas of 'Kulthum Nana' — a book written about the beliefs of women in the 18th century by Jamal al-Din Khvansari.]

needed this 50 percent of the country's work force. "Get things in order!" we cried, "Remove the barricades! Let the caravan of women pass!" But how did we go about giving them their freedom? Do we really have equality between men and women on all fronts? We are just satisfied with forcing them to remove their veils or with allowing them to go to some schools. And then what? Nothing. This is enough for them. Women do not have it in them to be judges, give testimony, and for years voting rights and representation in the assembly have been a farce. Even men do not have those rights. There is no true voting anyway. Divorce is up to the husband. How well we have interpreted the verse "Men are in charge of women" [Koran IV, 34]! In reality then what have we done? We have only allowed women to appear in public. Just hypocrisy. Pretense. That is, we have forced women who were in the past guardians of our customs, the family, the new generation, and our bloodlines to become frivolous. We have brought them outside of the home into the streets. We have compelled them to be shallow and flighty, to paint their faces, to wear a new outfit everyday, and to run around with nothing to do. Work, duty, responsibility in society, esteem? Never — very few women can achieve these. As long as the value of the social services of women and men and the value of their labor (their pay) remain unequal, as long as women do not take up the responsibility of working side by side with men in an area of society (except in the home for this is a private matter shared between a wife and her husband); as long as material and spiritual equality is not achieved between the sexes, our efforts in providing this superficial freedom to women will do nothing in the coming years but increase the hordes of consumers of face powder and lipstick (more products of the West!). Adding just another dimension to westitis. Of course, we are only speaking of the cities, where the leadership of the country to which women have no entrée reside. The village and tribal women have born the basic burdens of life for centuries.<sup>94</sup>

Another paradox which is very complex and to which no one has paid any attention is this: the lives of 90 percent of the population of this country are still guided by religious values and standards. By 90 percent I mean all of the villagers, combined with the urban mercantile classes, servants, and the aggregate of people who make up the lower strata of the country. These classes of people, because of their poverty, have nothing to rely on for survival but their religious beliefs. They are compelled to find today's unattainable happiness in heaven, religion, and the hereafter. And good for them! They will have

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<sup>94</sup> During the interval between the first and second editions of this volume several events have occurred in this country. One of them was the granting of nominal freedom to the "princesses of purdah" [*'olya' mokhaddarat* = "the secluded highnesses"]. Some women even take part in the puppet shows at the senate and the representative assembly. Giving freedom this way, however, is just cosmetic. It is meaningless, it is just words, merely pretense to fool foreign politicians. In spite of all this, do you not think that the dam has burst?

a drink once in a while, but they will also perform the proper ablutions, pray, fast during Ramazan, and even sacrifice a sheep for Emamzada Davud. The very minute a peasant's yearly yield of seven eggs suddenly becomes ten, he will grab his wife and kids and make a pilgrimage to Mashhad or, if not there, at least to Qom. And, if we have friendly relations with our neighbors, he will go as far as Karbala [in Iraq], and if he is a man of means, to Mecca! All of them are waiting for the twelfth Imam to appear. That is, WE are all waiting for him and rightly so. Except each of us in our own way. For no man-made, earthly<sup>95</sup> government has ever lived up to the smallest promise it made, and everywhere there is tyranny, injustice, terror, and discrimination! It is for these reasons that every 15th of Sha'ban<sup>96</sup> we celebrate so much that New Year's Day becomes jealous. Moved by their beliefs in the return of the promised messiah, that entire 90 percent of the honorable population of this country see the state as an agent of tyranny and as a usurper of the rights of the twelfth Imam ("His Highness the Lord of Time, may God hasten his coming!"). So they are right not to pay their taxes and to fool the bureaucrats and evade the draft with a thousand excuses and never give the right answer in any statistical survey. Although the newspapers are full of congratulations from the honorable folk of "Mazlaqan Chay for the newly appointed official in the census bureau," in fact, none of the honorable folk of that town recognize any organization called "the state." Except for the local gendarme and their transistor radio.

In Bushir and Bandar 'Abbas the saying "One mustn't sleep under the 'Ajam's wall'"<sup>97</sup> is still in use. (This "Ajam" is the state, the official who comes down from Tehran.) That means that one must not become a public servant nor should one ever trust the state's agents or agencies. For this reason all religious facilities from the public water cisterns and the mosque on the corner to the pilgrimage places outside town are covered with various manifestations of this lack of trust in the state and its workings. They are full of the symbols of expectation of the promised messiah, His Majesty the Lord of the Age, whose advent we rightly pray to God to hasten!

We find this sentiment in the words of the people, in posters on the walls, on the lips of the preachers, in our prayers, in our calls to prayer and litanies, in long odes during the elaborate ceremonies on the 15th of Sha'ban, on wedding invitations. Everywhere we go we live "in the protective shadow of the Lord of Time." In spite of all this, it is to these people that the state with its organizations and schools, with its barracks and its agencies, with its prisons and the blare of its radios, propagandizes about "national government" and yet practices something quite different. With "Oh, come on, do it for me"

<sup>95</sup> [In the original *mosta'jal* "short-lived, ephemeral."]

<sup>96</sup> [The birthday of the twelfth Imam]

<sup>97</sup> I am quoting from my dear friend Esma'il Rayin who is from those parts.

cajoling, and “By my life, do it for my sake!” it squeezes taxes from the same people; by force it conscripts them; it nourishes graft everywhere; its embassies are the gayest in the world! It glorifies yet another royal highness; and has deafened the heavens with the pomp of its ever-increasing millennial millenia; and it is forever showing off its military hardware to the people. In the end, it is because of these paradoxes that as soon as a grammar school student memorizes the “Imperial Anthem” as his national anthem, he forgets his prayers. As soon as he reaches sixth grade, he is separated from the mosque. As soon as he enters a cinema, he completely forgets about religion. For this reason also 90 percent of our high school graduates are nonbelievers. Not nonbelievers, actually, they are totally without belief, spinning in the air. Their feet do not rest on solid ground. They have no assurance or faith in anything, for they see that the government with all of its empty claims, its agencies, its budgets, and foreign aid, and in spite of its artillery and tanks, is not able to solve the smallest social problem: unemployment amongst high school graduates. And, at the same time, they see what an attractive refuge for the hordes of miserable, wretched, and poor our old faith can be, and on the 15th of Sha‘ban how happy people become and what a good time they have. This is why they are perplexed. The radio is constantly feeding them lies, the cinema parades superior worlds in front of them — but that other reality is also ever-present — that reality which comprises faith. And just how much is it possible to ponder these paradoxes, or to get upset about them, or to try to discover the Truth? Why not get rid of these illusions and not be like other people and not try to blend in with the rest of our society? So students say: “Let’s all be nihilists with no faith and no faithlessness, no lives to lead and no future. Just enjoy the moment.”<sup>98</sup> In the educational establishment it is well-known that our schools either create civil servants or turn out unemployed graduates. There is no argument about this. But a fact which is even more basic and yet left unsaid is that our schools produce the weststricken. They turn out cardboard people, ready to be infected with westitis. This is the greatest danger of our schools and education. A complete blueprint of the type of person manufactured in our weststricken factories will be given in a later chapter.

What I have to point out here is that, contrary to the opinions of our bearded historians, our past popular, political, and religious revivals never got us anywhere. (I mean past uprisings and movements which exaggerated nationalism and sectarianism.) If they did accomplish anything, it was to lay the foundation for the structure, ramparts of which were completed in Safavid times. That is, during the Safavid period national government and religion (the monarchy and the clergy) slept in the same bed. In the beginning of this book, I indicated what the general historical results of this togetherness were.

<sup>98</sup> Long before us, Khalil Maleki became aware of this “facelessness” of the youth. See the weekly journal *Mehragan*, 1332, 3 and 4. See also several articles with this title

And (off the record) you will recall that during the Sasanian period we also had a similar situation which led to the uprisings of Mani and Mazdak and eventually to the appearance of Islam. But today those same bedfellows are no longer sleeping together; they each have their own separate facilities, greetings, customs, and regulations. Our situation today is much worse than the previously mentioned ones. Today the process of division between religion and its old rival has reached such a state that our government goes to even greater and greater lengths in its reliance on westitis and in its insistence on aping foreigners.

As a result there will be nothing but destruction, decline, and bankruptcy. Conversely, religion with all of its institutions and rites tries as far as possible to rely on superstition and seek refuge in old, decayed customs, being satisfied with its role as guardian of a graveyard. In the twentieth century, it thinks in medieval terms. These days the shadow, opposition government of religion struggles for self-preservation just as desperately as the national government turns to the West to strengthen its base. It looks and tilts backwards as far as possible.<sup>99</sup> Actually, when the monarchy and the state see that 90 percent of the population pay no attention to their lies and congratulate one another enthusiastically on the birthday of the twelfth Imam (i.e., when the government and the monarchy see that their official titles have been usurped by religion and that they are not accepted by the people and that their underpinnings are weak), they have no choice but to throw themselves into the arms of the West as much as possible. They rely on military aid, on artillery and tanks given by America, on foreign publications, on foreign newspapers and reporters, and on foreign politicians, in the hope that they can perhaps hold out a few more days. Such are our rulers who promote national government and, at the same time, secretly destroy the hidden religious government.<sup>100</sup> And in order to fool the people they use the issue of the return of Bahrein,

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in the journal *'Elm va zendagi* [Science and Life] for 1338 and 39.

<sup>99</sup> The truth of this assertion was apparent in the radio debates between the Shah and the religious leaders (Isfand 1341 Farvardin, 1342 [Spring, 1962]). It later became clear in the merciless slaughter of the 15th of Khordad, 1342, which Radio Moscow gloatingly called "the quelling of a reactionary revolt."

<sup>100</sup> From the 15th of Khordad, 1342 onward it openly suppressed the religious government — this at a time when both the monarchy and religion are relics of past centuries! In any case, no other two institutions need each other so much as these two do. The important thing to notice is that these two rivals, after 300 years of sweeping their differences under the rug, are now openly hostile to one another. And this definitely marks a new stage in the confrontation, a stage in which the spread of culture and the expansion of enlightenment shall completely bypass these two rivals. Where will the confrontation which ended in the time of Mirza Shirazi with the assassination of the Shah, and in the Constitutional Period with the deposing of Mohammad 'Ali Shah and the change of regime, end up today? The answer to this question lies with the intellectuals.

while disputes about the Helmand River and the Shatt al-'Arab have remained unsolved for 200 years. All of this is going on at what time? At a time when, as I said, the machine demands that there be no boundaries, and calls for the smashing of doors and locks, for the spirit of internationalism in everything, and for common markets, open boundaries, and closed customs houses. At a time when mechanization carries with it the banner of the United Nations and progresses as far as the petroleum companies will supply it with fuel. We, on the other hand, are living in a time when we have withdrawn into the shell of national government and the walls which separate us from our neighbors are longer and thicker than the Great Wall of China. We are always isolated from the Iraqis, Afghans, Pakistanis, and Russians; we are not aware of each other's problems; at a time when the giant diamond and copper mining concerns can shoot Dag Hammarskjöld out of the sky in the heart of Katanga! It is in such an era that we, with our schools, national anthem, security organization, military aid, the celebration of the 2,500th year of the Empire<sup>101</sup> and cardboard people want to promote national government! In an age when national boundaries throughout the world only serve to delineate the spheres of influence of the various multinationals; for example, up to a certain point belongs to General Motors, up to there is the property of SOCONY Vacuum, over there belongs to Shell and British Petroleum, and from here to there belongs to Pan American or AGIP.

These days nations, tongues, races, and religious sects, if not merely the playthings of orientalists (whom we will get to later), are the subjects for experiments of the world's scientists, scholars, and researchers.<sup>102</sup> No one in the twentieth century is willing to fight over these problems. But if my Afghan neighbors and I, who share the same religion, race, and language are unaware of each other's fate or if visiting Iraq and India is more difficult than penetrating the Iron Curtain, it is because we Iranians are part of one company's sphere of influence, and the Afghans are part of another's. We live in an age in which the more confining national boundaries, the greater the tribalism, the more solemn the naive egotism of a Neanderthal Shah, and the more authoritarian the religious notions of what is kosher and what is nonkosher are, the bleaker the dungeons of nations and their people. If you disagree, answer this: which border or boundary has remained intact in the face of "Pepsicolonization"? Or impervious to the comings and goings of oil brokers? Or uninfluenced by Brigitte Bardot films? Or intact when confronted by heroin smugglers or when faced by suspect orientalists who are the official brokers of imperial-

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<sup>101</sup> [This was celebrated in Iran with great fanfare and at enormous expense in the early 1970s.]

<sup>102</sup> Two or three Swedish academicians are in the process of compiling a linguistic atlas of Iran and Afghanistan. Good news? Bad news? In any case the Afghan part is finished, but the section on Iran is incomplete; however this is not the place to discuss why.

ism? The most obvious example of this kind of fluid border is found today in Africa. At one point in history, France controlled three different parts of Africa: the Cameroons, Chad, and Central Sahara. The British controlled the areas adjacent to the French. Today the French and the English are gone and the independent countries of Africa have gotten on their feet. Each has drawn its own boundaries exactly along the lines of the former colonies. How many African tribes, peoples, and religions have been chopped up between the independent, self-governing countries of Africa? . . . Perhaps we still all remember that in the struggle for the nationalization of the oil industry, national leaders used the religious faction, i.e., the latent rule of religion, to such good effect for aims of that struggle. Confidentially speaking, the leaders of that time had enough sense to organize their struggle in such a way that with the help of the religious leaders, any uneducated commoner was able to see the forces of tyranny in the ruling elite who gave oil to the company and drew their swords on the people. This is the greatest lesson that our intellectuals and leaders must derive from those events.<sup>103</sup>

The last and most dangerous paradox arising from westitis I will again describe very discreetly, for in our part of the world great events are going on right to the north of us. We are forced to remain ignorant of these events and never allowed to be influenced by them. And even if we are influenced by them, it is only on the surface, in order to postpone the inevitable; whereas Cuba, just 90 miles from America, has been greatly influenced by these events without causing any adverse reaction! It is perhaps for this reason that the walls encircling our country are so thick, and our government, ignoring the latent rule of religion (which is in itself a wall within that outer wall and a government within a government) daily increases the thickness of our walls with its reliance on westitis and its insistence on greater subservience to the West! Perhaps they feel that in the face of the danger of our northern neighbor, the only salvation lies in taking refuge in the cocoon of medieval prejudices, intolerance, ignorance, and hatreds. In an era when the fates of

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<sup>103</sup> Let me quote once more from René Grousset, the French scholar:

The Iranian revolt against the oil company aroused the admiration of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Arab League. And this was the first time that the Shi'ism of Iran, which throughout these many centuries stood like a barrier to cooperation between Islamic nations, joined the cause of Islamic unity. And why? Because the era when the Safavid kings and the defenders of Shi'ism were forced to unite with Europe against the Ottoman Sultans who were the Caliphs of the Sunnis was over (*La Face d'Asie*, p. 132)

And I say: not "unite with" but "be gored by." In any case, is this good news for us middle eastern Asians? Or a danger signal for the oil consortium in which the French have an insignificant share? Whatever it may be — that which I have stated somewhat discreetly, René Grousset has said more plainly.

governments, flags, and boundaries are decided around the conference tables of the great nations, our nation is content to be only the watchman of the frontier of companies. It is also for this reason that our government as it suppresses religion and takes refuge in irreligiousness and in the aping of foreigners, because of its need for demagoguery, will also at times tolerate religion and the clergy and will reluctantly flirt with religious circles and their leaders. In any event, these reactions on the part of our government are merely postmortem spasms. If we, who are on the doorstep of such momentous events, do not react or do not try to put an end to our differences, no matter how much our walled-boundaries are fortified and no matter how much we try to prevent religion from eating away at the foundation of those walls by deceiving clerical circles, in the end, because of the simple principle of capillary action [*vases communicants*] the water level in this swamp will rise and wash away all of our straw palaces. We are not speaking now of the threats and intimidation which I mentioned at the beginning of the book when I explained where they now originated. Rather, we are speaking about harmony with advanced societies. You will pardon me if I have not spoken more candidly.



## VI. The Key to the Talisman: Breaking the Spell

Today we as a developing nation are confronted by the machine and technology. But, out of irresoluteness we have submitted to the dictum "whatever happens is for the best." What must we do? Will we constantly remain as we have been, merely consumers? Or will we have to close our doors to the machine and technology and retreat into the depths of ancient customs and religious rites? Or is there a third path? We shall consider these questions one-by-one.

The only path we have traveled up until now has been to remain consumers of machines and to give in to this twentieth-century destiny. This has led to our present state, to the age of westitis. This is an age in which we are dependent on the West to supply us with credit or aid every year, so that we can buy their manufactured goods and, once those are worn out, to repeat the process. It is true that this is an easy path which complies with a lot of indolence, laziness, spinelessness, and idleness. But if only this path led to a state where there were not all these deficiencies and all the dangers of bankruptcy or, at least, where there was not a need for this kind of scribbling.

But as for returning to our old cocoons, no caterpillar has ever done such a thing. We, after all, are a changing nation, and if we are plagued by anxiety about our values and ways of thinking, it is precisely because we are shedding our old skin. It is almost as if we were firing a starting gun.<sup>104</sup> Proximity to the machine causes us to tremble so. Suppose things were different and we remained fanatically bound by our old customs, and we resumed a primitive way of life with primitive tools (the same kind of life most of our rural people live). But is it not true that we, compelled by politics, economics, and the interests we share with the rest of mankind, have handed half of our country over to the shovels and drills of the oil companies? So that they can come, explore, dig, extract, and cart off the oil? How long can one sit by the side of the road and watch the caravans go by? Or sit on the bank of the stream and

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<sup>104</sup> [The text reads "giving the call to enter [the mosque]" ]

see life pass by? Even Ebn Sa'ud with all the excesses of his pre-Islamic-age kingdom (the chopping off of hands and heads) has given in to mechanization. So the road back to the past or to stagnation is closed.

The third road, which is unavoidable, is to get the genie of mechanization back into its bottle, to make it conform to our will. It is like a mule, made for bearing heavy loads. Or rather, it is obvious that for us the machine is like a trampoline; with its springs we will catapult ourselves further and further. Machines must be made and owned. But one must not be owned by them. One must not be too caught up in them, for machines are a means, not an end. The end is to eliminate poverty and to provide spiritual and material welfare for all people.

When our means of transport was the horse we had pastures and meadows, pleasant, green, and always in bloom. We raised the most beautiful horses from the finest stock in those pastures. We also had corrals in which we would brand the horses — with man's mark of ownership. We had stables in which the horses could live and breed. We had caravansaries where the animals could be outfitted. We then ran races (to wit, "betting" [*sabaq va remaya*]) so that the animals' muscles could be exercised. Is a car then anything but a kind of horse guided by man and made to serve him? And if we humans had no hand in the embryonic makeup and basic structure of the horse, we have in fact fashioned the embryo of the car in the cylinder and piston. Because of this, we need an economy which is appropriate for the manufacture and operation of the machine; that is, an independent economy. We then need education and methodology; furnaces to melt metal and to mold it to human will. We also need skilled workers to shape it into different forms; schools so that workers can learn their specialties practically; factories to turn this metal into cars and other manufactured products; and finally, markets in cities and towns so that these products can be made available to people.

Do not ask me to go into the details, for I am neither an expert nor is it within the scope of this book to do so. In order to gain control over the machine, one must make it oneself. Things made by others, even talismans or lucky charms, contain in themselves something of the unknown, a hint of unseen worlds. These are frightening worlds outside mankind's grasp. There is a mystery hidden within them. The owner of that talisman or charm does not possess it, but rather, in a way, is possessed by it, because he must live in the shadow of its protection and find refuge in it. He must live in constant fear lest the talisman be somehow insulted or comes out of its wrapping and sees the light of day, or God forbid, falls down! But if a child who wears one of these talismans should someday (when he is older) open it out of curiosity and see the triangles, squares, stars, and magic formulas on that scrap of oil paper contained within it, and if he is able to understand the meaning of the words and numbers written there (or their lack of meaning), will he still have the same old awe or fear or dread of that charm in his heart? For us victims of westitis the machine is a talisman. We seek asylum and feel safe from the

calamities of time in its protective shadow, not knowing that it is a talisman that others have pinned to our chests to frighten us and milk us for everything we have. Let us become curious; let us mature; and ultimately let us unwind the talisman and find its key.

Of course, one could rightly ask: if the solution is so simple, why has it not occurred to the nation's thinkers before now? And if it has occurred to them, why have they not tried to turn the thought into action? In answering these two questions, I will limit myself to stating two reasons. The others may be guessed by the reader himself.

The first is that dread and awe of talismans are still in our hearts. In our language, the words *haram* [unlawful, proscribed] and *tahrim* [proscription] are from the root of the words *hormat* [awe] and *ehteram* [respect]. Our dread of machines is exactly like our dread of talismans. If it is forbidden for us to open one, then it is also forbidden to become adept in the mysteries of the other. Only God knows whether this same dread is responsible for westitis or whether it is because of westitis that we are afflicted with this dread. It is another case of "which came first the chicken or the egg." Let us not pursue this, but discuss the fact that we live in the age of 'Ali Baba and the forty thieves. Like 'Ali Baba, we, hidden from sight, peered through a crack and watched the thieves repeat the magic words three times and saw a wall of rock open as if it were a door. What treasures lay hidden behind that door! But to date, our greatest accomplishment has been to mimic the magic words of the thieves. We took the trouble to learn the words and now parrot them back. The rock slides open, but the treasures that were behind the rock have been carried off. Once we stop being tempted by those treasures and magic words, and start to concentrate only on why that rock slides open and try to find the secret of its movement and the nature of the effect of those words, only then will we discover scientific method and be ready to understand the mysteries of the machine.

Our present situation is this: We use machines from morning until night and even cook our daily meals on them. However, we are frightened by them in the same way a child is frightened whose mother has put a pot on her head. We see the machine as some pot-headed monster, a monster composed of a lunch pail used also for cooking a child's meal and a mother whose warm embrace is the child's only refuge. It is to allay this fear that most of our students abroad study medicine or psychology or the other social sciences. Because the country cannot absorb technicians and in order to allay this same fear, today there are many agricultural engineers who are real estate assessors for the Agricultural Bank Rahni (The Mortgage Bank) and many chemists who are directors general and many mineralogists who are building contractors. It is true that for years in our schools we have been overloading the minds of our students with chemical formulas, physical laws, and mathematical equations and have almost completely eliminated literature, philosophy, and ethics from the curricula of all the high schools and colleges. The mind of

every high school graduate is a storehouse of formulas, laws, and equations. But what is the result of this education? Since such theoretical knowledge is not followed by practical application in laboratories, which would allow the student to see his ideas at work, in order to assay every sample of stone, earth, or tar we are still forced to resort to foreign laboratories! We have been and are so meticulous with our local crafts, carpet weaving, tile and inlay work, and miniatures. It is surprising, then, that when it comes to machines, we are so careless. But do you not think that this carelessness in matters of new technology is a result of our faith in the longevity of our oil supplies, and our reliance on machines that will necessarily come to this country as a result of our wealth and oil credits? What is really interesting is (I have heard) that there are people in high positions who have even "constructed a theory" about this expectation. It goes like this: now that we are an oil-rich country and foreigners will shell out anything from pigeon's milk to human souls to get their hands on the oil, why complicate life? Why get involved with establishing factories and heavy industries with all their headaches, the training of experts, tolerating the total lack of quality in the products of the initial stages of industrialization, coming to grips with disputes between workers and management, insurance, retirement, etc. In reality this is exactly the basis on which we operate. That is, for years this "very new" theory has been the principle upon which we have worked in this country. It is also one of the causes of our westitis; or one of the basic results of it. Again we have the question of the chicken and the egg.

If we are skilled when it comes to national and local crafts and not meticulous when it comes to machines, it is because in those crafts, fathers (albeit orally) have spent years teaching their sons a skill through practice, and because years of apprenticeship and mastery are involved. Professional, practical, and theoretical training of the kind found in the fine arts has developed traditions, principles, and axioms, and is deeply rooted in the past. But the machine has just arrived on the scene. It has no traditions; nor are there classes or training for it. The different levels of expertise (apprentice-master) are still not defined. Given such a situation, if we are building a dam or if one (i.e., their) oil well catches fire, of course it will make sense to seek advice from a foreign expert who is well-trained and has more experience than we. But unfortunately we are not only resorting to foreign expertise in such exceptional situations, but also in many other cases. In order to operate a sugar mill, cement factory, textile mill, a wool-spinning plant, or even a tire factory, not only do we still import everything ready-made from Europe and America, but we also bring in with the machines a whole slew of foreign help, from the simple workers to engineers and supervisors, often at astronomical salaries! We entertain them for years so that they can prosper and live well and make sure the cement kilns will be fired or the sugar will be white or the yarn

and wool will be uniform. Of course, if we look into the matter closely, there is nothing surprising about it. Either we do not have people to replace these foreign workers or, if we do, they are not of any use, because the sellers of the factories have stipulated in the sales contracts that the factories will be certified to be in proper working order, when their own workers have set them up and delivered them to the buyer. This then is the logic of determinism in a backward, west-stricken economy!: "If you can do better, go ahead. Design your own factories so that you can set them up yourselves. I, as the manufacturer, must send my experts in after the machines so that I can provide them with a good living; with trips to the south and the warm weather; with tours and relaxation; with new experience and with a more open hand and a wider point of view in this machine-consuming world!"

The second reason that arises from, or is complementary to, the first is this: we are buyers of western manufactured goods, and the sellers of these goods will never be content to lose such good customers. As long as we remain only consumers in this world of commerce, the manufacturers will necessarily remain sellers. They know how to manoeuvre the ins and outs of the situation in such a way as to insure that this one-way relationship shall remain stable forever, and that the ties between buyer and seller will never be broken. For this reason, the West is being consistent in not giving us permission to become manufacturers (i.e., not giving the necessary credit) or always standing in the way of our becoming manufacturers one day. The West makes our governments come and go, props us up, plays up to us, and sets up orientalist congresses for us. It extols our "great men" and "leaders." The West is continually glorifying them on the radio, in the newspapers — once every week; every month. After all, they have heard that our nation has been mesmerized by the phrase, "Europe says . . . !"

From the point of view of economic interests of the industrial manufacturers (i.e., from the point of view of international economics), the longer we take to acquire machines and technology, the better! UNESCO states this and operates on this principle — likewise, ECAFE and FAO, as well as the United Nations itself! All of our evils and our deficiencies stem from this very problem. For, in the global picture, we have been forced to comply with the economic interests of the machine makers. If during the last two or three centuries our politics on the whole has been tied to the changes in the West, it is for this reason: our economics during this period has been conforming to the changing economics of the West. I believe I gave an example of this when I spoke of the oil situation. The years 1330 to 1332 [1951–1953, the Mosaddeq period] during which even our beans found an export market were exceptions. During that time the general economic basis of the country was not dependent upon oil revenues. And how appropriate that was! This is an old story which can be retold often. But as long as the oil continues to flow, considering the

revenues and the parasitic industries it nourishes, the situation will remain as it is today.<sup>105</sup> The westerners extract the oil themselves, refine it themselves, transport it, and figure out the bill themselves. And every year they deposit 40 million pounds or so in our accounts in their export banks as a kind of credit for the purchase of their manufactured goods. We are forced to use that credit to buy from them. And who exactly are "they"? Forty percent are Americans and their economic satellites, another forty percent are English and their retainers, and the rest are French, Dutch, and the like. In return for the oil they take away we must import machines. And with the machines, experts on machines and experts on dialects, literature, art, and music! This is the reason that Morrison-Knudsen imports whatever it needs from America, from bulldozers to wire and nuts and bolts. Likewise, AGIP imports from Italy; John Mowlem, the construction firm, from England; and Enterprise from France. What is more interesting are transactions done under the table. The John Mowlem Company having caused a scandal, packed up and left. But not

<sup>105</sup> (See Table 1, below.) You can subtract the figures yourself to obtain the trade deficits. I am ashamed to. In place of those figures, I will quote from the introduction of the *Journal of the National Bank of Iran* (#254) by Mr. Khashkish, a banking expert:

During an approximately 32-year period only 12 banks and their few branches operated in Iran. Of that number five were specialized banks. But between the years 1335-1339 [1956-1960] (the period of an open-door government policy), in only a three year period, 14 new banks complete with several branches, representatives, and agents opened up. Their function was to pay out the wages of workers in foreign factories the products of which we purchased. As a result, during the 6-year period 1333-1339 [1954-1960] our imports shot up from 8 billion rials to 52 billion, 600 million, i.e., about 8 times.

**Table I. Foreign Trade Figures (1952-1962) (Source: Iran Almanac 1963, p. 298)**

| YEAR      | Exports (excluding oil) |                    | Imports (including Exemptions) |                    |
|-----------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
|           | Weight (ton)            | Value (1000 rials) | Weight (ton)                   | Value (1000 rials) |
| 1952-1953 | 354,079                 | 5,831,528          | 232,236                        | 5,031,394          |
| 1953-1954 | 443,764                 | 8,425,632          | 424,445                        | 5,424,266          |
| 1954-1955 | 490,478                 | 10,288,171         | 503,226                        | 7,425,015          |
| 1955-1956 | 507,873                 | 8,033,726          | 637,132                        | 9,125,439          |
| 1956-1957 | 463,529                 | 7,930,610          | 744,876                        | 20,981,288         |
| 1957-1958 | 436,641                 | 8,352,922          | 743,784                        | 25,229,342         |
| 1958-1959 | 445,398                 | 7,940,615          | 986,092                        | 33,458,260         |
| 1959-1960 | 397,231                 | 7,701,017          | 1,201,950                      | 41,630,135         |
| 1960-1961 | 446,307                 | 8,359,875          | 1,913,514                      | 52,657,139         |
| 1961-1962 | 551,384                 | 9,593,450          | 1,619,234                      | 47,170,707         |

really. They are still at work. And where? In *Time* magazine.<sup>106</sup> They are writing propaganda for the head of the Plan Organization who first opened up the country to them. And who was the president of this John Mowlem Company in Tehran? None other than Peter Avery, the English orientalist and persianist. A man who is quite captivating, friendly, and who teaches oriental language at Cambridge and Michigan! In Cambridge with a copy of this book under my arm, I went to see him in the winter of 1341 [1962]. My venerable hostess put a visit with him on our itinerary. I was greeted by "by your leave's" and polite conversation and hospitality. As we were talking, I said to him, "You know, sir, Edward Browne, in order to become 'Edward Browne [the great orientalist],' did not have to become the president of John Mowlem." He launched into a sob story: "Browne had money. He was rich and I was poor." He continued on in this way and I realized that people throughout the world are all petty to the same degree. Yet with all this, the same man had just written a book called *Modern Iran* in which he mentions this book and its author:

Recently a book appeared about the 'disease' of Westernism; it was, incidentally, banned by the authorities. Men who think like its author are probably in a minority among educated Iranians, but history shows that no intellectual movement in Iran, however small its beginnings, can be totally ignored.<sup>107</sup>

These orientalist types are really up on their current events. Or Ford and Rockefeller companies have set up cultural foundations somewhere and are offering grants for the spread of culture. All well and good. With these same grants, they set up the Iran Foundation and built a hospital and a university in Shiraz. But just look at the kinds of watering holes they have set up for the wealthy; how, right on the doorstep of Hafez and Sa'di's tombs the medium of instruction of the Faculty of Letters in the university is English; just look at the observatories we have to study the movements of American satellites; and how they have imported everything from nuts and bolts, pots and potholders, doors and frames, all from America! Ford and Rockefeller have given money to Franklin Press in Tehran so that high school textbooks can be printed.<sup>108</sup> What a giant company they have started and what a monopoly in the textbook market they have, and how effectively they have killed off the local textbook concerns!

We went to Firuzabad (around New Years, 1341 [March, 1962]) with

<sup>106</sup> *Time*, Feb. 28, 1964, p. 40. [The article to which Al-e Ahmad refers is called "Vindication for Ebtehaj." It recalls the arrest of Abu'l-Hasan Ebtehaj, one-time head of the Plan Organization, and gives a brief description of his troubles with the court.]

<sup>107</sup> *Modern Iran*, (London, 1965) p. 468.

<sup>108</sup> See "Balbashu-ye Ketabha-ye darsi" [The Confusion of Textbooks] in my *Seh maqala-ye digar* (Tehran, 1963).

Mohandes Seyhun, Farrokh Ghaffari, and Mohandes Moqtader and also visited Kazerun and Shiraz for some desert sightseeing. At that time we heard that Monsieur Ghirshman was working on his excavations at Bishapur. We decided to go there and pay him a visit and ask a few questions. He was not there, or if he was, he was sleeping and did not allow us to enter his tent. But on those same ruins at Bishapur where he set up his camp, one could see the symbol of the Oil Consortium everywhere: on the tents, the equipment, and the cars. What does this mean? It means that the archaeological excavations at Bishapur are an outgrowth of the oil industry. And this is the reason why Monsieur Ghirshman wants to prove with his pick that Kharg Island was once a stronghold of Christianity and other matters.<sup>109</sup>

In this way oil leaves the country and machines with all their side effects -- from orientalist and experts' to films, literature, and books -- take its place. And who profits from this exchange? First the companies (whose profits on capital investments outside of their home countries are untaxable), next the brokers. And who are the brokers? In addition to those I have mentioned, you can guess the others for yourselves. Because of this we have a cabinet, a parliament, a government, and a state which rises and falls with the fortunes of this trade. Similarly the West runs our politicians and either destroys them or sings their praises. Truly, our politicians have no other choice but to pay more attention to what Reuters or United Press or *Time* have to say than what the Tehran Chamber of Commerce of the Cultural Task Force or the City Council of Birjand is thinking (if Birjand does indeed have such a Council.) When the economy of the country is so dominated by others and these "others" are manufacturers of machines, it is obvious that we must always remain consumers. Fortunately the payments on the machines, tractors, and bulldozers are not usually paid off before they themselves break down and rust. The companies of course do not offer more than a five-year guarantee.<sup>110</sup> Things really get interesting when this one-way relationship is somehow

<sup>109</sup> See my "Jazira-yi Kharg" [Kharg Island] and also the essay Ghirshman wrote about that island. And keep in mind that it was also one of these orientalist (archaeologists) who first became aware of the oil in Khuzestan. It was de Morgan, the Frenchman, who had come to Iran to excavate in Shush, even before D'Arcy's time. He published the results of his excavations in the magazine *Ma'aden* [*Les Mines*] in Paris and what a stir it caused! See *Panjah Sal naft dar Iran* [Fifty Years of Oil in Iran] by Mostafa Fateh.

<sup>110</sup> "The Lebanese philosopher Charles [Habib] Malek, former President of the United Nations General Assembly, chided Western businessmen for offering only material ends. Said Malek: 'Roads, dams, efficiency and the smile of rulers -- that is all that is [pushed down the throats of the backward nations]; but spirit, freedom, joy, happiness, truth, and human's truth -- that never enters the mind. A world of perfect technicians is the aim, not a world of human beings, let alone being divine.'" (*Time*, Sept. 27, 1963, p. 79). Remarks found in the report of the 13th International Management Conference. This Conference was attended by 4200 representatives from 84 countries and was held in Manhattan.

interrupted in one part of the world. For example, first a report by United Press and Reuters is made. Next the Red Cross gets into the act, saying, for example, that two of their nurses have been wounded. Next the foreign residents of that place pack up. After that, the Pope prays that the misfortunes of the area will soon be over. Then the averages on the London and New York exchanges plummet. Next *The London Times* and *The New York Times* begin equivocal articles and suggest solutions to local authorities. Then comes the break in diplomatic relations. Afterwards the mercenaries spill forth and the seventh fleet gets underway in the Mediterranean or in the Persian Gulf or in the waters off China or off the coast of Africa. We have experienced this many times. In the nationalization of oil, the Suez Canal, Cuba, the Congo, and in Viet Nam.

But, to be fair, we must admit that our own politics and economy have not stood idle during this period. Our west-stricken economic experts sit around and talk and foreign advisors come and go. And, all of a sudden you see that a Jeep or a Fiat assembly plant opens up. Or a plastics or a car battery factory for the military (on account of which several army officers were sent to prison for pilfering). And with what pomp and ceremony, what tri-color ribbons, scissors, etc.! But what is the reality of the situation? It does not pay for the companies to send printed cloth, other local textiles, batteries and unbreakable ewers to us. It is in their interest to export heavy machinery exclusively. Moreover, if a foreign company can export the various components of a machine as "spare parts," it will pay reduced customs duty and its packing and transportation costs will be lower. Besides, of course, the costs of assembly of those components will be less in a place like Iran than they are in Europe or America. For this reason Jeep, Fiat, radio, battery, and other prefabricated components assembly plants have caught on so well in developing countries. In any case, let us not forget that even this is a step in a backward country. If it is not a correct or well-thoughtout step, at least it is something to show off. At the end of the year, official statistics can be provided to show the percent increase in the number of workers, in national capital investment, and in foreign investment (see Table II).<sup>110a</sup>

<sup>110a</sup>

**Table II.**

| Province        | No. of Industrial Units | Workers | Capital    |
|-----------------|-------------------------|---------|------------|
| Tehran          | 2,844                   | 48,556  | 22,297,274 |
| Gilan           | 856                     | 7,659   | 2,802,233  |
| Mazandaran      | 883                     | 16,504  | 4,621,189  |
| East Azerbaijan | 393                     | 6,229   | 728,363    |
| West Azerbaijan | 152                     | 2,676   | 902,473    |
| Kermanshah      | 366                     | 4,062   | 844,373    |
| Khuzestan       | 272                     | 3,044   | 1,465,025  |

It is on the basis of such statistics that we hold "seminars," draw up the second and third development plans, and have foreign advisors continually visiting the country. If you really want to know the truth of the matter, these "industries" are merely appendages of the industries of the West. In any event, assembling machines is on the order of repair work. It is not industry; nor is it manufacturing machines. Let us keep in mind that if a second and a third development plan are necessary, if the World Bank applies pressure, and if public opinion in the western nations (i.e., the directors of the companies) approve of a government in Iran only when that government on the surface is said to have more well-formulated, broader, long-term, and more "enlightened" development plans, it is mostly for this reason: western industry must know how many of its manufactured products will be absorbed by the Iranian market in the coming five- or seven-year period and what the country's capacity to digest these products will be. They do not operate in the haphazard way we do; everything is according to plan. And we all know that surplus products cause crises, revive the monsters of unemployment, and increase the danger of a change in the regime. After all, Monsieur DeGaulle is still kicking,<sup>111</sup> Sir [Harold] Macmillan has not reached retirement age, and President Kennedy is still in his youth. In any case, the West must know how much it can milk its obedient and uncomplaining client during the third development plan and what percentage of its share of the oil revenues it can keep and, in exchange, send refrigerators, radios, and pressure cookers.

We also know that the principal overseers of all these cultural and industrial commissions, seminars, and discussions are foreign cultural and industrial experts,<sup>112</sup> with definite goals and well-defined motives. Do not try to tell me about the impartiality and vision of UN and UNESCO advisors — the gold and diamond concerns of the Congo did not even give a damn about the late Secretary-General, Hammarskjöld. We observed how this respected organization has become the defender of the interests of those same British and Belgian companies there.

Of course Iranians also participate in these planning seminars and com-

|                      |       |         |            |
|----------------------|-------|---------|------------|
| Fars                 | 347   | 6,642   | 1,987,831  |
| Kerman               | 208   | 1,963   | 682,093    |
| Khorasan             | 845   | 11,069  | 3,278,087  |
| Isfahan              | 899   | 24,006  | 5,842,838  |
| Sistan & Baluchestan | 89    | 304     | 62,010     |
| Total                | 8,156 | 130,714 | 45,513,789 |

(Source: *Iran Almanac*, 1963, pp. 404-405).

<sup>111</sup> [Keep in mind that this book first came out in the fall of 1962.]

<sup>112</sup> I do not have the exact figures, but I would guess that right now (1341), thirty thousand foreign experts, engineers, and specialists are at work in this country.

missions, that is, the cream of our intelligentsia. The cream of our west-stricken thinkers. But in what way do they participate? You will excuse me if I am crude, but I do not think that most of the Iranian participants at these seminars ever get beyond the level of interpreters. Because, if they do indeed get beyond this level and express their own opinions, first they will not be accepted, and, second, their right to associate with the elite will be withdrawn. Therefore, if our politics and economy are as linked to the politics and economy of the West as we have seen, it is also for this reason: most of our intellectuals (that group which has made a place for itself in the government) are, in the final analysis, as their "great mission of conscience and spirit" the translators for foreign advisors, the interpreters, and reporters of their opinions and goals. After all, do we not ourselves know how many impoverished hamlets, how much arable land, how many rivers whose water is not used, how many thousands of run-down qanats, and how many thousands of people without work, literacy, schools, and health care we have?<sup>113</sup> These matters do not require us to implore the assistance of foreign advisers. If only this assistance would solve something for us! If only we could see the day when we would not need the hordes of advisors and consultants.

Today, it is because of these same west-stricken, government-employed intellectuals, that the political representatives of the West and their advisors still act towards us the same way that the English and Russian ambassadors acted towards Atabak-e A'zam and Amir-e Kabir.<sup>114</sup> That is, if our west-stricken intellectuals deserve to be compared to those two great men. In those days, however, it was only a small number of ambassadors who could exercise influence; now the advisors come in droves. And if in those days only an Atabak and an Amir-e Kabir were the targets of that influence, both of whom were wise, experienced men steeped in knowledge of life, custom, and their own eastern standards, albeit enchained by the beliefs, manners, and customs of this part of the world, nowadays the targets of influence-peddling or the

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<sup>113</sup> By way of example, let me mention some statistics. At the present time (1341), from the point of view of health services, out of the required 9,500 doctors we only have 5,915; instead of 38,000 midwives and health assistants, we have only 1,000; instead of the needed 190,000 hospital beds, we have only 19,000. In education, instead of 9,500 teachers with college degrees, we only have 4,200; out of the 50,000 or so villages at most only 7,000-8,000 of them have schools. The interesting thing to note is that, in spite of this lack of educational facilities, in 1963 they closed all of the country's introductory and advanced teacher's colleges under the pretext that boarding schools involve unnecessary expenses, etc. This way 42 of these colleges were closed throughout the country.

<sup>114</sup> [Atabak-e A'zam or Amin al-Soltan (d. 1907) was prime minister under Mozaffar al-Din Shah (ruled 1896-1907) and was, according to E. G. Browne, "an experienced and wily statesman." Mohammad Taqi Amir-e Kabir (d. 1852) was one of the few talented men who was allowed to serve as prime minister and advisor to the Qajar king Naser al-Din Shah.

interviews of western advisors are a group of west-stricken intellectuals who neither have the strength or the assurance of an Atabak or an Amir-e Kabir, nor do they even have the guts of a Hajji Mirza Aqasi,<sup>115</sup> who (and I do not know why) is wrongly known for his impotence.<sup>116</sup> This is the way the country is governed. A nation whose fate is left in the hands of the machine and is guided by west-stricken intellectuals [with their] seminars, conferences, and Second and Third Development Plans. A country which relies on aid grants and is burdened with absurd investments in baseless, assembly-plant industries.

We have spoken enough on the determinism of the machine. Let us now turn to the leadership of the country — to our west-stricken intellectuals. What manner of men are they? While it is true we are making broad judgments, the reader can determine who are the exceptions and set them aside.

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<sup>115</sup> [Hajji Mirza Aqasi was the grand vizier of Mohammad Shah Qajar (ruled 1834–1848).]

<sup>116</sup> ‘Abdallah Mostawfi in his *Sharh-i zendagani-e man* [Autobiography] (Tehran, 1341, pp. 45–50) has defended this poor old man and has shown that the machinations of Qa’em Maqam account for his bad reputation.

## VII. An Ass in a Lion's Skin, or a Paper Tiger?

A west-stricken man who is a member of the ruling establishment of the country has no place to stand. He is like a dust particle floating in space, or a straw floating on water. He has severed his ties with the essence of society, culture, and custom. He is not a bond between antiquity and modernity. He is not a dividing line between the old and the new. He is something unrelated to the past and someone with no understanding of the future. He is not a point on a line, but an imaginary point on a plane or in space — just like that dust particle. Of course, you are probably asking: then, how has he risen to a position of leadership among the people? He has done so through the predetermined decree of the machine and the prerequisites of politics which cannot but conform to the politics of the great nations. In this part of the world, especially in oil-rich countries, it is customary for that which is lighter to float to the surface. The wave of events in this type of oil depository only brings the chaff to the surface. It does not have enough power to touch the bottom of the sea and extract the gems lying there. We in our west-stricken state with all of its concomitant problems are dealing with lightweight drifters who float on the wave of events. The ordinary man on the street is not at fault here; his voice is not heard, his record is clean. He will go in any direction you point him; that is, he will assume any shape you train him to.<sup>117</sup> And if you really want to know the truth, this is because the common man has no voice in determining his own destiny; that is, in order to determine his destiny, we do not ask him what he thinks or consult with him. Instead we ask and consult

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<sup>117</sup> I have been criticized for not considering the peoples' struggles in political events in this book. From the Constitutional Revolution to today, I have not ignored their struggle. I have passed over it in silence, because, if the leadership of all the struggles (with all of the waste produced by imprisonment, killing, and exile) had been right, today our situation would be better than it is. Of course the people are not at fault in this matter. The wrong leadership in the struggle has brought about such consequences.

with foreign consultants and advisors; our situation is this desperate! We are thus plagued by west-stricken leaders who at times have even gotten an education and traveled to Europe and America, but if only we were dealing exclusively with the foreign-traveled and educated in our ruling establishment. But this is not so. As I see it, and without going into details, it has become customary to have in a position of power only the "lumpen" from every class or group, the "rejected" elements, the good-for-nothing, the irresolute in countries in this part of the world, as an unavoidable result. The most disreputable merchants direct the Bazaar and the Chamber of Commerce. The most useless educators are the heads of the educational establishment. The most bankrupt of our money-lenders are our bankers. The most impotent and corrupt individuals are representatives in parliament. And the most misguided people are the leaders of the nation. As I said before, disregard the exceptions. The general rule in these parts is to give authority to the rootless and the spineless; not to mention the mean and the vile. He who is right, he who speaks the truth, perceives correctly, and behaves properly has no place in the system. Emulation of the West dictates that anyone who reaches a position of leadership in this country must be easily led, derivative, unprincipled, rootless, and devoid of any footing in the land. For this reason the typical west-stricken leader of our country rides on the waves, his feet dangling in the water, and, again for this reason, his status is never certain. He can never take a stand on any issue or any problem. He is bewildered. Every minute he takes another stand; he has no self-will; he is at the mercy of the wave of events. He does not challenge anything. He maneuvers around the largest obstacles with flattery and gentleness, therefore, his position is never threatened by any crisis or event. If this government fails, there is always the next. If he is not on this commission, there is always a seminar. If not in the newspapers, then on television. If he is not in this bureau, then he is in that ministry. If he does not get an ambassadorship, there is always a cabinet post. For this reason the situation can change a thousand times and governments can appear to come and go, but you will always see the same west-stricken leader sitting in his accustomed place like the rock of Gibraltar. This west-stricken leader is also very crafty for, after all, he knows what part of the world he lives in. He knows he cannot afford to offend anyone. He knows that, at any given moment, the wind can suddenly shift. Without a political compass he knows the direction of the forces of power. Therefore, he has to be everywhere at once. In the party; in society; in the newspapers; in the government; in the committee on education; in parliament; in the contractors' organization. And because he has to be everywhere, he is forced to be with everyone. He has to be congenial and polite. He can never show guts. He always has to toe the line and keep his feet on the straight and narrow path. He has to be obedient. He also has to write articles against "dissent."<sup>118</sup> He must

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<sup>118</sup> See *Sokhan* (Khordad, 1340 [1961]). [I believe Al-e Ahmad is referring to an

also know a bit about philosophy and speak on freedom. For all these reasons (or for showmanship), occasionally it occurs to him that he must show some leadership and do something. But since he only moves with the wave of events, by the time he decides to act, the time to act has passed and he is left behind. This in turn becomes yet another lesson teaching him never to show the slightest amount of initiative.

The west-stricken man is of no particular religion. He has no faith in anything, and yet he believes in everything. Being opportunistic, he picks and chooses what he wants to believe. Everything is the same for him. As long as he can attain his goal the means are of no importance. He has no faith, principle, ideology, no belief in God or humanity. He is not even irreligious, he is opportunistic. Once in a while he will go the mosque, just as he would go to a club or a cinema. But wherever he goes, he is only a spectator. Just like a spectator at a football match. He is always on the sidelines. He never puts himself out. Not even to the extent of shedding a tear for a departed friend or being moved by a shrine or attempting quiet contemplation when he is alone. He is not even used to being alone. He avoids being alone. Since he is basically afraid of himself, he always has to be somewhere. Of course he votes, if there is a vote and especially if it is fashionable, but his vote always goes to the person from whom he can get the most in return. You never hear any complaints or objections or "buts" or "whys and wherefores" from him. He convincingly justifies everything with assurance in his voice and passes himself off as an optimist.

The west-stricken man chooses the easiest path. He is always ready to "seize the opportunity," and appreciate the moment, but not, of course, in the philosophical sense. If his car and his appearance are in order, then he does not have a care in the world. Whereas in the old days "worries about children, livelihood, clothing, and good" prevented the poet Sa'di from contemplating the heavens, the west-stricken man is absorbed in his own fodder and will not put himself out for anyone. He never troubles himself about anything. He can easily shrug off any problem. And since his behavior is premeditated and since every step he takes is based on a plan and every act he sees as part of an equation, he does not bother with anyone else, let alone their problems.

Generally the west-stricken man does not have a specialty. He is jack of all trades and master of none. But since he has studied a bit, read a book or two, and, perhaps, has gone to school, he knows how to speak convincingly in any gathering and draw attention to himself. Perhaps he once had an area of expertise, but after he realized that in this country one cannot get a piece of the pie with only one area of expertise, he had to dabble in other areas. Just like one's grandmother, who because of her age and years of experience knows a

little about everything (of course only about old-womanish types of things), the west-stricken man also has a little information on everything (of course, only those things that are good for television, for the committees on education and seminars, for large-circulation newspapers, and for speeches to be given at the club).

The west-stricken man has no personality. He is a creature lacking in originality. He, his house, and his speech are colorless, representative of everything and everybody. Not "cosmopolitan." Never! Rather he is a nowhere man, not at home anywhere. He is an amalgam of individuals without personality and personality without specificity. Since he has no self-reliance, he puts on an act. Although he is a master of politesse and charm, he never trusts those with whom he speaks. And, since mistrust is a watchword of our times, he never reveals his true feelings. The only thing which might give him away and is visible is his fear. Whereas in the West the individual's personality is sacrificed to the requirements of specialization, in Iran the west-stricken man has neither personality nor specialty. Only fear. Fear of tomorrow. Fear of dismissal. Fear of anonymity and oblivion. Fear that he will be discovered for what he is, a blockhead.<sup>119</sup>

The west-stricken man is a gigolo.<sup>120</sup> He is effeminate. He is always primping; always making sure of his appearance. He has even been known to pluck his eyebrows! He places great importance on his shoes, his clothes, and his home. You would think he had just emerged from gold wrapping paper or he had just come from some European "maison." His car is always the latest models, and his home, which once was traditional (with portico, cellar, wading pool, covered hall, and entryway vestibule) now changes daily. One day it resembles villas by the sea with large picture windows and excessive florescent lighting.<sup>121</sup> Another day it turns into a cabaret, glittering and garish, filled with barstools.<sup>122</sup> And yet, on another day, each wall is a different color,

<sup>119</sup> For confirmation of this idea see the book *Iran ra az yad ha-barim* [Let us not forget Iran] by my dear friend Mohammad 'Ali Eslami Nudushan (Tehran, 1961).

<sup>120</sup> On the west-stricken man as sex object issue or this shallow westernism, see *Taskhir-e tamaddon-e farhangi* by Sayyed Fakhr al-Din Shadman (Tehran, 1947) which we mentioned above.

<sup>121</sup> Witness this full-page colored advertisement which appeared in the newspaper *Ettela'at* (May 9, 1963) on the beauties of a newly built suburb of Tehran:

... the special mechanism and amazing features of this suburb really lie in the fact that it has transplanted the architectural style of Europe and America to our country. The modern villas of this resort town ... will so capture the hearts of the western-civilization-struck [sic] and brought up in the West that they will always feel that they are living in Europe or America. . ."

Need I say more?

<sup>122</sup> [The text reads "tabourets"]

a jumble of multicolored triangles covering each surface. In one corner is a hi-fi radio and record player, in another corner a television, in another a piano for his daughter, and in another the stereophonic speakers; also a kitchen, where strewn about in every corner are a gas range, an electric washing machine, and similar worthless gadgets. The west-stricken man is the most faithful consumer of western manufactured products. If he were to wake up one day and find that the hair stylist, the tailor, the shoeshine parlor, and the car repair shop had closed, out of frustration he would give up the ghost lying down with his legs stretched in the direction he thinks is that of Mecca even though he does not know which way Mecca is.<sup>123</sup> His creature comforts which I have described are more vital to the west-stricken man than schools, mosques, hospitals, and factories. It is on account of him that we have such unauthentic and unindigenous architecture<sup>124</sup> and such sham urbanization. It is on account of him that the avenues and intersections of our cities have been turned into sideshows under the ugly glare of the neon and florescent lights. It is on account of him that the cookbook *The Way to the Stomach* has been published with the title *The Way to the Heart*<sup>125</sup> and filled with detailed instructions on how to prepare foods loaded with meat and cream which, in this very hot and dry climate, are totally undigestible. Foods which merely justify the use of gas ovens manufactured in the West. And it is on account of him that they are tearing down the arches of the bazaars.<sup>126</sup> Also on account of

<sup>123</sup> [This is the position in which the Shi'ites leave the deceased.]

<sup>124</sup> I once went house hunting for a friend. In Darrus [an area in present-day North Tehran] there was a house patterned exactly after Notre Dame de Haut which Le Corbusier constructed in the modern style. It only lacked the tower. But it had all of its crevices and arches, etc.

<sup>125</sup> A book filled with flashy illustrations and very expensive! It was written or translated by a Mrs. Yusofi (Tehran, n.d.).

<sup>126</sup> See this author's "Chand kalema ba mashshataha" [Some Words with the Beautifiers] in the journal *Andisha va honar* (January, 1958). See also the article "Karvansaray-e Safavi-e Esfahan ra cheguna Kharab Kardand?" [How they Destroyed the Safavid Caravansary of Isfahan] by 'Abd al-Hosayn Sepanta in the April 1963 edition of *Armaghan*.

In addition to these, my dear friend Taqi Fedakar relates that, as a child, he witnessed how, during the first part of the Reza Shah period, they destroyed the Menar-e Shahrestan. This was a minaret in Isfahan on the Yazd road by the Zayanda river which had a double staircase and was very well articulated and important from the point of view of history and architecture. They destroyed it so that they could build a barracks in the ruins of Farahabad park. And who ordered this to be done? The Swedish general [sic] Gleeurup [Colonel Gleeurup was the Swedish leader of the 2nd Gendarmerie regiment, see *Under Five Shahs*, Hassan Arfa (New York, 1965) p. 75.] who at the time was the head of a regiment or something like that in Isfahan. He ordered his men to shore up one side of the minaret and to hollow out the base of that side. Then they wrapped blankets around the supports, poured kerosene over them and lit them. After the supports burned away, the minaret toppled over and that was that!

him the Takya-ye Dawlat was torn down.<sup>127</sup> It is on account of him that they have built that monstrosity of a Senate Building. It is also his fault that our soldiers are so flashy and have the entire inventory of a haberdashery pinned to their chests and shoulders or hanging from their aglets.

The west-stricken man never takes his eyes off the West. He does not care what happens in his cozy little part of the world, in this corner of the East. If by chance he is interested in politics, he is aware of the slightest shift to the right or the left on the part of the English Labor Party and he knows the names of American Senators better than he knows the names of the ministers in his own country's government. He knows more about the commentators in *Time* and the *News Chronicle* than he does about his cousin far away in Khorasan, and he imagines them to be more truthful than prophets of doom. And why? Because they are more influential in the running of this country than any local politician, commentator, or representative. And if he happens to be interested in literature, the west-stricken man is eager to know who was this year's Nobel Prize winner or who got the Goncourt or the Pulitzer. And if he happens to be a scholar, he folds his arms and ignores all of the country's problems; problems which are truly worthy of research, and tries only to find out what some orientalist said or wrote on what is worthy of investigation. But if he is one of the masses and a devotee of weekly magazines and color supplements, we already mentioned what he is capable of.

In any case, whereas at one time a verse from the Koran or one of the traditions of the Prophet was enough to win an argument and put an opponent in his place, today quoting some foreigner on any subject silences all critics. Things have reached such a ridiculous state that one prediction from western fortune-tellers and astrologers is enough to immediately disrupt and terrify the entire world. Today divine revelation no longer appears on the pages of holy writ, but emerges from foreign books or from mouths of reporters for Reuters, United Press, etc. (those large concerns which produce both real and manufactured news reports!) While it is true that the way to become familiar with the scientific method, the technology of mechanization, and the basic philosophy of the West lies only in foreign and western books, a west-stricken individual is not interested in the basis of western philosophy, and even when he wants to know something about the East he goes straight to western reference books. It is for this reason that the study of orientalism (which is almost certainly a parasitic outgrowth of imperialism) dominates west-stricken minds and opinions. The typical west-stricken individual instead of referring to western documents and sources to find out the principles

<sup>127</sup> [See p. 19 above] It is the same old "each one builds a new structure then goes and leaves it to another" all over again, [so that], on the basis of the "innovations" of the likes of "Mohandes Foroughi" [architect of the National Bank], the Bazaar branch of the National Bank be constructed not upon the site of the old Tekya, but much further away from it.

of western civilization, only looks into them to learn about what is non-western, e.g., about Islamic philosophy, or Yogism, or the nature of the spread of superstition in Indonesia, or the Arab national consciousness. On every other eastern topic he deems only western writings to be the right sources and standard works. Thus the west-stricken man can only recognize himself through the writings of western orientalist. He has singlehandedly turned himself into an object to be placed under the microscope of orientalism, and he relies only on what the orientalist sees there, rather than what he really is or feels or sees or experiences himself. This has to be the ugliest symptom of westitis.

To feel and imagine yourself to be nothing, to lose all faith in yourself and control of your senses, and to hand them over to some hack who has written or spoken as an orientalist! And here is something which really puzzles me: Since when has orientalism become a "science"? If we say that some westerner is a linguist or a dialectologist or a musicologist in the oriental field, that is something else again. Or if we say that he is an anthropologist or a sociologist, that is even possible. But an orientalist in a general sense? What does that mean? Does it mean that he knows all the secrets of the East? Are we living in the age of Aristotle? This is why I call orientalism a parasitic growth on the roots of imperialism. What is really amusing is that these orientalists have organizations affiliated with UNESCO, biennial and quadrennial congresses, gatherings and such nonsense. . .<sup>128</sup>

The unfortunate thing here is that our contemporary statesmen, especially those involved in politics and literature are the protégés and avid fans of these Western orientalists. (Incidentally this itself is one of the characteristics of politics and statecraft in west-stricken countries — most of our statesmen are men of letters, fully-bearded men of letters. For this very reason, the reverse also prevails, namely, every political leader is required to write a book!) For, once upon a time, they were students in the schools or classes of those professors. An orientalist, since he has no other specialty, viable skill, technical training, or talent, can by learning an eastern language openly or secretly serve the interests of his country's foreign ministry. And later, either in the wake of foreign-made machinery or as its advance guard, he can be exported to this side of the world. He comes along with technical experts so that, as these products are being sold, he can jazz up the sales pitch with a little Persian poetry and win the hearts of faithful clients who will exclaim, "See! Did you hear that? He speaks such good Persian!" This is why we have

<sup>128</sup> For the latest example of this see the article "Dar mahzar-e 'aref-e Irani" [In the Presence of an Iranian Gnostic] by Jan Rypka (*Rahnema-ye ketab*, March-June 1963). The article is full of exaggerated praise about the "discovery" of Shaikh Shams al-'Orafa' and his miracles, etc. Keep in mind that this same Mister Jan Rypka came to Iran as a translator for Czech experts (Skoda) during the twenty-year period and later on wrote a literary history for us!

orientalists around, with their books, research, digs, and poetic and musico-logical studies. Then what is the function of the orientalist while the market for machines is so bullish? He comes and writes a commentary on Molla Sadra<sup>129</sup> or offers an opinion on the belief or lack thereof in the messiah Imam, or investigates the "excellent qualities" of "Shaikh al-Pinky Lee Kashkuli." Not only do all of our west-stricken intellectuals back up their opinions with these studies, but I have heard many times that even on the pulpit, in mosques (which are thought to be the last bastion against the West and westitis) where *mollas* quote Carlyle, Gustav Le Bon, Gobineau, Edward Browne, and others as final authorities on some personage or event or sect.

Of course, it is quite justifiable to say that, since the western scholar has access to university and research facilities and to their well-stocked libraries and since in his understanding of eastern languages, religions, and literatures, he has a scientific method, a freer hand, and a much wider point of view, his opinions are necessarily to be preferred to the opinions of easterners themselves who have neither a scientific method nor research facilities. And perhaps because the museums, libraries, and universities on that side of the world are depositories for the plundered artifacts, antiques, and libraries of this side of the world, the western scholar is bound to have more tools in the field of oriental studies at his disposal than an easterner. For this reason most of the eastern source material must be sought in the West. Also probably because the easterner himself has not reached these worlds or since he is still hampered by the problems of daily life and does not have the opportunity to discuss this world and the hereafter . . . and a thousand other "probablys." I assume all of these "probablys" can be taken for granted. But what can you say about matters on which both an easterner and a westerner have stated opinions? Both using one method of investigation, but with two sets of eyes? Two points of view and two languages? Will you not agree that in the eyes of the west-stricken individual, the opinion of the orientalist or western scholar is, regardless, to be preferred to the opinion of an eastern specialist? We have experienced this many times.

My last point: the west-stricken man in this country absolutely refuses to acknowledge something known as the "oil problem." He never utters a word about it since it is not in his economic interests to speak about it. And, although occasionally it is his only source of income, he will never bother himself with the question of oil. Not a word, a hint, a reference, not even a "but." Never. He has completely given in on the subject of oil. As occasionally happens, he might even serve the cause of oil or become a broker for it. He will even edit a journal about it (to wit: *Kavesh*<sup>130</sup>) or make films about it (see the

<sup>129</sup> [Sadr al-Din Mohammad b. Ebrahim Shirazi was a 17th century philosopher.]

<sup>130</sup> [A journal which was published about every three months from 1960-1963 and which was started by the late Prime Minister, Amir 'Abbas Hoveyda.]

film "Mawj va Marjan va Khara" [The Waves, the Coral, and the Granite], but do not tell anyone you saw him discussing oil! The west-stricken man is not a dreamer, not an idealist. He deals in reality. And reality in this country means getting on without discussing the question of oil.



## VIII. A Society in Shreds

What are the characteristics of the west-stricken society which these leaders govern? Both from a social and an economic point of view we have seen how much our society is plagued by an irregular and disrupted organization; it is an amalgam of a pastoral economy, rural society, and a fledgling urbanization dominated by the large foreign economic concerns resembling trusts and cartels. We have everything mixed together; our society is a living museum of modern and ancient social institutions. And at least one and a half million of the inhabitants of this country are still nomads. This is the official and amended figure. One must ask the Defense Ministry and the Bureau of Tribal Affairs attached to the court whether the figure is more like over 3 million<sup>131</sup> people who are not settled and who are the agents of destruction of anything in their path. They spend their lives herding sheep and 95 percent of them live in abject poverty. They are vagabondism personified; they spend the entire year wandering about in search of the most basic of all the world's gifts, water. They travel from their summer highlands to their winter camps in the south and back again. But the people who pull the strings as far as both internal and external political provocation is concerned are the chiefs of these tribes. They are the official guardians of our national boundaries and are true monarchists. In return for their services they receive healthy payoffs. But, in reality, they bring insecurity with them and leave destruction and terror in their wake. Their chiefs participate in ceremonious occasions and, at the drop of a hat, will send congratulatory telegrams to the court. But they are a constant threat to anyone who entertains the notion of building anything within their ter-

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<sup>131</sup> According to the census carried out in November 1962, the number of nomads in Iran has been reduced to 15 percent of the total population, (25 percent urban and 60 percent rural.) Due to certain historical factors, feudalism and the tribal system grew together in Iran, and the only power that could manifest itself in the feudal society was the tribal one. It is not accidental that all the dynasties that came to power belonged to the tribes. Even at the time of the constitutional uprising, tribal chieftains (Bakhtiaris) and great landlords (Sepahsalar Tonokaboni and others) directly participated in the issue. Source: *Iran Almanac 1963* (Tehran: Echo of Iran) p. 419.

ritory. The Khan of Basht still receives an annual kickback from a certain oil company; the Khan of Hayat Davudi had a justifiable claim of ownership when Kharg Island was turned over to the oil company; the Khan of the Qashqa'is sits in exile in Switzerland, waiting for an opportunity to return and turn things upside down with a vengeance. (In the spring of 1962, we noticed what havoc the government people had played with Qashqa'i lives and property in Firuzabad.) And if the Bakhtiaris are quiet, it is because many of them, from the Constitutional Period on, have become courtiers, senators, heads of the secret police, etc.

In order to begin any kind of undertaking in this country, the tribes must be settled first. Of course, not in the way we have settled them until now; never by forced settlement, but by means of a careful, well-thought-out, and logical plan: by allocating water rights and arable land; by providing the latest farming equipment for each clan; with the assurance that excess sheep stock will be bought up; by encouraging the individual member of each tribe to participate in the building of their own future homes; by establishing health and educational centers and repair facilities for each newly-founded village. In any case, as long as the tent posts of the nomads are not converted to the foundations of village dwellings and as long as tribal men and women remain ignorant of agriculture and as long as their children never see the inside of a school, any step towards improvement in this country is either a lie used to fool the people or a childish gesture. Given these circumstances our government policy vis-à-vis the tribes consists of allowing them to remain as they are, to rot in their poverty and chronic disease, to tremble during droughts so much that not a drop of life is left in them, and as a result, they disappear! We also have seen that from 60 to 70 percent of our honorable population live in the villages which have been briefly described in this book, in *Awrazaan*,<sup>132</sup> and in *Tat neshinha-ye Boluk-e Zahra*.<sup>133</sup> Villages which day by day wither away while freshly built cities are in a process of expansion and growth, expanding as I said, like a tumor. What else can you compare the spread of cities to — cities which spring up like mushrooms in every direction, but have no streets, avenues, telephones, or sewers planned in advance — except to a cancerous growth? We uproot the people from those villages and bring them to these cities. And our cities, in reality, are no different from those villages. Except in the cities, work is hard to find, and, when there is work, it is seasonal. But in the villages there is nothing. The charade of counterfeit land reform programs which we have witnessed during the last ten years, whereby the size of the small landowning class was to be increased, just made matters worse. If we had strengthened this class 200 years ago, by now we would have had a

<sup>132</sup> [*Awrazaan* (Tehran, 1954), a sociological, cultural, and linguistic survey of Al-e Ahmad's ancestral home located to the northwest of Tehran in the Shahrud valley.]

<sup>133</sup> [*Tat neshinha-ye Boluk-e Zahra* (Tehran, 1958), a detailed study of the village affairs, customs, folklore and dialect of a village near Qazvin.]

genuine constitutional regime. But today the talk is about "cooperatives." The division of property for the purpose of creating a small landowning class in its present form is already a thing of the past. The division of land in this form is the biggest obstacle to mechanized farming. The machine has neither the ability to tolerate the small landowner, nor is the small landowner able to provide the equipment necessary for modern mechanized agriculture. Given our characteristic individualism and independence, it is inconceivable that a majority of our villagers would on their own initiative get together, invest the capital, and bring machines into their villages. . . . In this matter I will be brief and recommend that you read the articles of my friend Hosayn Malek which appear in various issues of the journal *'Elm va zendogi*. In them he laid out a very precise plan for agricultural development.<sup>134</sup>

In any event, so long as the evil of conscription is not removed from the villages, so long as the temptations of the city are around, and so long as the fear of tribal migration remains, the villages will never be developed. So long as roads do not reach the villages and so long as electricity does not light up the homes, and so long as 30 or 40 percent of the villages do not have one repair center for agricultural machinery, mechanized agriculture will not come into being. As long as we still speak of the small landowner and as long as there is no class in machine maintenance set up next to every school, the machine will remain foreign to the villager, and, if it eventually makes its way to the village, it will be nothing but the cause of destruction, provocation, and unrest.

As for the cities — these cancerous limbs — which spread and grow daily in their unshapeliness and lack of originality; daily they require more and more sustenance in the form of western products, and daily they become more uniform in their decay, rootlessness, and ugliness. Each city has its own showcase intersection and statues built by decree in the center of the squares. The arches of the bazaar in ruins, neighborhoods separated from one another, without water, electricity or telephones, without social services, lacking community centers, and libraries, mosques in ruins, *Hosayniyyas*<sup>135</sup> destroyed and *tekyas*<sup>136</sup> bereft of meaning. Not a political party nor a club in sight — and nowhere to go for a walk, and at most having one or two cinemas which are nothing more than a means to arouse the sexual organs and in which one can just kill time or fool around. Our cinemas neither instruct nor help in the intellectual development of the people. And one can assert without fear of contradiction that in this part of the world the cinema is nothing but a piggybank into which each one of our citizens is to deposit two or three

<sup>134</sup> See Volumes 4, 5, and 6 (1959) which are devoted to land reform and the last in volume 10. These articles had been written before the beginning of the implementation of land reform in its present form.

<sup>135</sup> [An enclosed area used to present passion plays about the martyrdom of Imam Hosayn.]

<sup>136</sup> [*takya*, see p. 44 above.]

tomans each week, so that the principal stockholders in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer can become millionaires.<sup>137</sup> That which molds the thoughts of our urban population is the cinema or the state radio or the popular magazines. All of these media proceed on a road which ends in conformity: houses all the same, clothes all the same style; luggage, plastic plates and glasses, physical appearance, and, worse than all, thought processes the same. This is the biggest danger of our newly founded urbanization.

If conformity of thought and life-style is dangerous in the milieu of advanced, industrial societies to the extent that it subordinates the individual to the service of the machine, then for those like us who are merely consumers of machines the danger is twofold. It makes us doubly subservient to the machine. A westerner who serves a machine at least has some notion of democracy, for political parties are an outgrowth of the machine. But as for us, people who have no parties, in whose religious society the number of schools decreases daily, who are, moreover, saddled with an antiquated,<sup>138</sup> primitive form of government, if it is determined that we are to become servants of the machine, to be all cut from the same cloth, God help us! In that case, nothing will be left, neither the root nor the branches. In such a country, the large thoughtmills must not fall into the hands of commercial interests (as in the case of television, this is not America, after all!) nor should they be at the disposal of government propaganda (as in the case of the radio, we are not living behind the iron curtain!) In a developing country such as ours, the media must benefit society, must serve society, and must be administered by elected councils of writers and intellectuals without any material or ideological ulterior motive.

Moreover, for some time it has been customary for everyone to go on about the dangers of large landholding estates; of the dangers of large real estates. They are unaware of the fact that these days large estates are no longer profitable, for everyone from the Shah down to the other landowners are considering dividing their property. They pass this off, incorrectly, as a key to solving all our problems. Those things which are dangerous today are: large transferable estates, money, shares of stock, and bank credits; capital deposited in the fiduciary accounts of foreign banks and the financial power of the individual who gains control of industry; the power of large stockholders and national trusts; and especially the influence of those who, if it can be put this way, run the education industry. We must keep dangers caused by these things in mind and a plan for nationalizing them or for "socializing" them must be drawn up.

However, from a political point of view we exist under a dictatorial and at

<sup>137</sup> "The people of Tehran spend 23 million tomans on the cinema each month. The cinema owner makes about seven times the cost of each film as profit." This is a title of an article in the magazine *Khvandaniha* ["Readables"] (n. 96, June 20, 1962).

<sup>138</sup> [*ahd-e Daqyanus*, i.e., the time of Decius, indicates time immemorial.]

the same time chaotic government — despite all of its half-baked manifestations of freedom, which act as a kind of party decoration. It is dictatorial in that we have no hiding places, no freedoms, and no rights when confronted by it. And chaotic, in that in spite of all this, one can still breathe, one can shout into an empty pit, as you can see in this essay. Since every ordinary man, whether he wears a soldier's uniform or has become a censor, in his heart, is still that same indifferent, unprejudiced, this-too-will-pass person and has not yet turned by inexorable force of the machine into an insensitive petrified tool in the hands of the government. May we never see the day when we give up this last advantage of backwardness and primitive culture!

In any case, in this country the army dominates all issues, determines the final outcome of all situations, and is the big winner in budgetary sweepstakes, (Officially 30 percent, but really something in the range of 54 percent of the entirely national budget is spent on the upkeep of our armed forces.) over and above all the foreign grants which, in the face of nationwide poverty, exclusively nourishes the armed forces; not to mention the fact that the legislative branch of the government had been indolent years before it fell to its present inertia, and that the judicial and executive branches interfere in each other's affairs to a great extent, and that our administrative bureaucracy still operates with the slowness of the era of the horse and buggy. All of these are symptoms; the basic cause is simply that this frail body [of state] cannot support such a grandiose, pretentious, and infectious head.<sup>139</sup> When we ask what are all these soldiers for they say: "They are to defend the boundaries and

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<sup>139</sup> These days (1961) debates about the armed forces have even entered the pages of large-circulation newspapers, perhaps because of foreign pressure. See the two-part article "Arzyabi-e naqsh-e artesh" ["Evaluation of the Role of the Army"] by Daryush Homayun in *Ettela'at*, 9th of June and 7th of July of 1962. This Daryush Homayun is one of several writers who are the pride of *Ettela'at*. Here are a few sentences from the first installment:

The Iranian military establishment from the point of view of the interests and capacities of the country is too large to remain aloof from the general currents of economic and social developments. Military considerations aside, all in all the role of the military is internal. . . [and from the last part of the article:] In a country like Iran, the work potential and means of the military is not something that can be ignored in the matter of the organization of the country . . .

and from the second article:

The Iranian army with close to 150,000 men in uniform, a large share of the national budget, and tens of thousands of men who every year are either inducted or discharged, is not a separate social institution which can be pressed into duty to protect our independence and security. . . Is it not yet learned in our country that without mutual defense pacts our military capacity is insignificant?

safeguard national security and integrity." But in reality? We have seen how porous our national boundaries are vis-à-vis the influence of foreign companies and how internally diffuse our national integrity is. And besides, where is the threat which makes all this defense necessary?

All of these soldiers and arms did not do us any good in September, 1941<sup>140</sup> or on August 19, 1953.<sup>141</sup> Keeping 150,000 (again, the official figure) of the best members of the younger generation armed to the teeth, feeding them, and training them so that their presence will lend credibility and stability to private government is the full meaning of the elaborate military facilities of our government. It ignores the fact that, in the feverish period of change and reconstruction which lies ahead, it would never be in our interest to assign each year these many able-bodied men to service in the military, to assign them to tasks which in no way add to national capital investment. In this age the villages must not be emptied of their labor force in the name of conscription, so that young men can come to the bases and learn the arts of war which will be used against an unknown, future enemy. We cannot just sit by while every year at least 300,000 able men are forced to bear arms and practice drills which, since the siege of Herat,<sup>142</sup> have never been of any use to us. This militarization seems all the more foolish at a time when mutual defense is the first item on the agenda of even the industrialized and advanced states.

In an age when the fates of governments and world boundaries are determined around the conference table and not on the battlefield, to speak of the advantage of donated artillery is ridiculous. Similarly ridiculous is parading in an armory with tanks and artillery and training paratroopers and commandos who are only of any use in crushing student demonstrations on university campuses or in quelling the disturbances caused by religious students at the Fayziyya Madrasa.<sup>143</sup> For putting down such minor disturbances there is never any need to resort to so many weapons and men.

Let us look dispassionately at Japan and Germany, countries which found the strength to rebuild their devastated economies, only because they were forced to disarm after World War II. And to rebuild them in such a way that, after less than twenty years, their economic competition has become a threat to the victors in that war throughout the world marketplace. If both of these countries had (as they did before the war) wasted a major portion of their work force and economic power on the production of arms, would they have been as successful in relaying and reorganizing the foundations of their economic and political sectors today? In an age when the final solution for the Algerian struggle was that France, after eight years of war and bloodshed,

<sup>140</sup> [When the Allied forces invaded Iran.]

<sup>141</sup> [August, 1953 = The restoration of the monarchy by the CIA.]

<sup>142</sup> [1837 and 1856]

<sup>143</sup> [Fayziyya Madrasa, located in Qom was the scene of antigovernment demonstrations in the early 1960s.]

handed over Algerian oil and independence, what good are soldiers and arms? Except for civil wars? If France with all her grandeur and with all her paratroopers and commandos, in the end, was not able to crush ten million Algerians, whom can we confront with our 150,000 troops? It is better for us to make do with a security force in the form of police or gendarmerie, and even if it is not possible now to submit to such a bold plan, we must definitely convert all of our military bases into vocational and technical training centers which will modernize the villages and familiarize the soldiers of today (the farmers of tomorrow) with the technology and general and specific instruction necessary for each particular area.<sup>144</sup>

We also make a pretence of having a western democracy; that is, we make a show of democracy. Here, however, there is no sign of western democracy, its conditions, or its prerequisites: freedom of speech, freedom of belief, freedom to use the media (which in our country is a government monopoly), freedom of publishing opinions opposed to the authority of the prevailing government. But our state plays at democracy; only to silence some foreign political opponent whose country must consider a loan request. We indicated that western democracy depends on political parties and that the fortunes of these parties are subject to economics. If not, they would turn into the political

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<sup>144</sup> During the interval between the first and second printing of this book, the Ministry of Education with great fanfare and extensive propaganda created the Literacy Corps. This means that high school graduates chosen by lottery would, after four months of basic training, be sent in uniform to teach in the villages in lieu of purely military service. With a salary of 150 tomans per month. And until now they have completed two or three cycles, in which some two or three thousand of these "Literacy Corpsmen" have been sent to the villages with elaborate ceremonies in the cities and the villages. On the surface it is a positive step and will result in stopping a small number of the hordes of high school graduates (20,000 per year) from wasting their time; however, in reality it is the biggest advance in the process of "militarizing" the educational system of the country. Whether an honor or betrayal, the basic initiative for the program rests with Dr. Parviz Natel Khanlari, formerly a poet, later a senator, and presently the Minister of Education! The results of these steps on the part of the Ministry of Education would have been useful if the program were not under the aegis of the military, but under the supervision of Normal Schools and if a greater of volunteers could be accepted with the stipulation that they would be exempted from military service. In any case, in my opinion, the program was extremely harmful because:

A. On the basis of the plan 30 percent of the budget of the Ministry of War, which because of American pressure was to be pruned, will be shouldered by the Ministry of Education.

B. The teaching profession which was beginning to gain some status after the salary increase of 1962 (during the time of Derakhshesh the minimum was raised to 500 tomans), has now lost its importance, being equated with forced labor in the army.

C. The Ministry of Education, which heretofore was the governmental institution most remote from militarization, has now been placed under the spurs of the army.

groupings which we have in this country. These political groupings, if they are not merely tailor made, lasting a few days, or if they have not come about just for patronage purposes, without a doubt represent some small faction. A faction which, since it does not have a free hand in political struggles (There are no clubs, no free press, no permission for party gatherings and marches.), is content to cultivate its secrecy and the aura of its martyrdom. These factions, whether they are of political or religious shadings, are nothing but a kernel of opposition which someday may prove useful. For they have severed their ties with the people and are not really in the thick of things, their avenues of contact with the people are closed and the fire of their laments has gone cold; the most that can be expected from these factions is that they may someday serve as the possible basis for a political instrument of some foreign power which wants to provide its designs with a regional and national cast. Most of the coups d'état and rapid changes of government in this corner of the East are carried out in the name of these same factions, if they are not carried out by the other political groupings. But in reality they are directed by some foreign political power. In any case, it is certain that given such a situation, we cannot play at being a western democracy. We are neither allowed such imitation nor is it in our interests to do so. Pretending to be a western democracy is in itself another symptom of westitis. Once upon a time the landowners trucked the peasants by force from the villages to the polls, but in January 1963 and in subsequent elections, we saw that the city ballot boxes were placed directly at the doors of the ministries and bureaus, and that an order was issued stating that all salaries for the next month would be paid upon presentation of the employee's voting slip! It is the old story, "If the donkey won't come to the heavy load, you bring it to him" all over again. And what a field day the government had with its claims about free elections and the large numbers of voters!

In this country the only time one will be able to talk about democracy, that is, the only time the votes and will of the people can be made known is when the important local authorities, landowners, and the rest of the khans are stripped of their power and influence, so that they cannot get in the way of free elections; the media is not only in the hands of the government, but also in the hands of the opposition; political parties (in the true sense, not wearing the demeaning uniform of the official parties) have the power to act and have found a wide forum; and the influence of the security forces and SAVAK in the affairs of state is eliminated.

At one time there was a great hue and cry about the absence of political freedom, for the last person to have control over the popular vote (aside from the village headman, the gendarme, the local ruler, the landowner, and the county supervisor) was the person who paid the voters to miss a half day's work and brought them to the ballot boxes. But today, when the agents of SAVAK stuff the boxes and supply the list of representatives, what can one say? Nowadays even shouting does not do any good. The victories of SAVAK

recently have been directly proportional to the defeats of the country's intellectuals, and whatever our thinkers have managed to string together has merely become a net in the hands of this newly created agency. So that with terror, threats, cooptation, imprisonment, and exile, SAVAK can make it appear as if nothing is happening on the surface and the two legislative assemblies can open right on time, like two blossoms. And why has it turned out this way? Because the people knew nothing about democracy, and even if they once did, they saw no good in all the clamor for liberalization; so now they have quietly and peacefully turned their fate over to the successors of the intelligentsia. In any case, so long as the concept of democracy does not penetrate the heart of society through a continuous program of education and training, and so long as the people remain unaware of a party system (in its true form), to speak of democracy in this country suits only a parliament of so-called leaders who have already made their way and need national elections in order to justify their own positions.

## IX. What Are Our Schools and Universities Accomplishing?

Now let us glance at present-day Iranian society from an educational point of view, a point of view which has always been the focus of my interests.

From this point of view we are like self-sown weeds. The soil is ready; some seed caught in the wind or in a bird's beak falls on it; rain comes along and something sprouts. We build schools in any way in order to increase the value of the land around them or for appearance's sake or as a public endowment funded by the political spoils of some strongman or through the honest efforts of the people of a village or with the customary one-third of the legacy of some late property owner. In any case, as soon the school is built, one of the infirm branches of the all-consuming educational establishment locates it; and this only after a great deal of legwork, hustling and headache. There is no orderly plan nor thought given to whether the kind of school is necessary or whether it is frivolous. It is attention to quantity which still dominates the educational mentality of this country. And what is the final goal of education? As I said, training west-stricken minds; or manufacturing worthless diplomas and determining the employment value of the education of a group of people who can only serve as future fodder for the administrative bureaucracy and who need a piece of paper to fill a slot in the system. There is no harmony in the function of our schools. We have all kinds: religious and Islamic ones, Italian, German, and schools which turn out half-baked clerics and students of theology. We have technical and vocational schools and many other kinds. But there is no proper record to find out the outcome of this diversity, the *raison d'être* of all these schools, what they turn out, and what their graduates do after ten years of schooling. Diversity in itself, if it entails a division of activity and satisfies the requirements of the diversity of popular interests, tastes, abilities, and understanding is quite useful and is itself the ultimate sign of freedom. The kind of diversity in our schools is unplanned variety, however. It is a seed which will sprout differently in different soils. There is a world of difference between the public and private schools, between Tehran schools and those of the provinces. They share all the same programs and maybe the

same kinds of teachers, but in one school there are 80 students per class, and in another 25, etc. Moreover, in the curriculum of the schools there is no trace of any reliance on tradition, no sign of the culture of the past, no philosophical or ethical principles and not a word about literature; no link between yesterday and tomorrow, between the home and the school, between East and West, or between society and the individual! How can a tradition, which has, as we have seen, become so lifeless, affect the curriculum of the schools? And how can the home, the foundation of which is in a process of decay, serve as the basis for the schools? In any case, each year about 20,000 high school graduates spew forth until, lo and behold!, they become potential fuel for all future dissatisfaction, complexes, crises, and perhaps revolutions. They are people without faith, lacking any kind of enthusiasm or drive, purposeless tools of the government; all of them are accommodating, cowardly, and useless! Perhaps this is the reason why all of a sudden in the last ten years our religious schools have caught on so well. For in this type of school, at least, there is no perceptible threat to the religion and faith of the students who come from strictly religious households and still have not been hardened by the poisonous atmosphere of westitis. But what good is that, when petrified religious environments will merely fossilize them in different ways? Moreover, what is the point, when the issue of religion versus irreligion, education versus the lack thereof is only an urban issue? Or one of the diversions of urban living? And out of the 50,000 inhabited places in the country, at least 40,000 do not have a school of any kind.<sup>145</sup> If only those places which did have schools did not have them, since, in that case, there would only be one evil and it would be shared by all. But today there are a thousand evils and in each place they are different: the problems of textbooks; teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms; differences in the ages, intelligence, languages, and religions of the students; the teachers' familiarity with or ignorance of the principles of education; the moribund atmosphere of the schools; the uncertain status of the music and physical education programs in the schools; and a thousand other problems. And more important than all of these, the purposelessness of education itself, the chaos of curricula. It still is not known why the student must complete elementary school, and with what goal in mind and in preparation for what? And, for that matter, why high school? Why university? God save us from these universities which ought to be the center for the most vital and outstanding scientific, technical, and literary research. Allow me now to turn to the nature of these universities.

We have the University of Tehran, National University, University of Shiraz, a university in Khorasan, and one called Jondishapur University [in

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<sup>145</sup> The "Literacy Corps" asserted that with all of its shortcomings it has also set up schools in 10,000 other places. And this in spite of all the defects which I mentioned; in any case, it is something to rejoice about.

Ahvaz], etc. The National University is a racket operated by the west-stricken intellectuals. Having returned from Europe and America and having taken so much jeering and scoffing from the University of Tehran with its ways so rapidly petrified into unflexible traditions, they went and, with the help of higher ups in the government, opened up a store for themselves. It even takes some effort for me to call this institution a university. But what about the provincial colleges and universities? Some time back Pishavari<sup>146</sup> in Azerbaijan founded the University of Tabriz as a symbol of the independence or autonomy of the province, as foreseen by the Provincial Councils Law (all traces of which have been rubbed off the books). After the insurrection in Azerbaijan died down, Iranian authorities saw that this particular heritage of Pishavari's government could neither be derided nor attacked like its other heritages, nor could it be allowed to remain, for it was a reminder of the Democratic Party. So they said, "What shall we do? Let's go and build universities in the other provinces too. . ." Thus today we have all of these universities. What a blessing! At least there are places for all the candidates for tenure who are returning from abroad. But what exactly do these universities do? No one has been able to figure this out yet. What are their fields of concentration? Which province's climate is more conducive to which specialties? Which of them does better work than the others? What are the results of their activities? God only knows when these questions will be answered. As for the University of Tehran — with its past history and importance, and all of its traditions which have disappeared and its independence which has been minimized, whatever it is, as we said before, it is supposed to be the center for the most vital, most outstanding, and best research. But is it indeed?

That portion of university offerings which has to do with technology and machinery (the faculties of applied science) even in the last stages of its educational program merely turns out good mechanics for western manufactured products: no new research, no discoveries, no inventions, no solutions to problems, nothing. Just those same repairmen or operators or starters of western machines and manufactured products and those same evaluators of the resistance to stress of building materials and this kind of nonsense. The only form of scientific investigation in the country (albeit abbreviated) goes on in the Razi Foundation or in the Pasteur Institute, and I do not know whether they are affiliated with the University and Faculty of Agriculture or whether they belong to the Ministry of Health or to the central office of the Pasteur Institute in Paris. Perhaps it is possible to say that the Medical School [of the University of Tehran], when compared to other medical schools on an international level, has no shortcomings. But I must immediately add that this advantage is itself due to the relatively high mortality rate in this country. I have a friend who is a doctor who studied in France. When the topic of the

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<sup>146</sup> [Prime Minister of the short-lived Azerbaijan Republic.]

scars left by the local disease, *salak*<sup>147</sup> came up for discussion, no matter how much his professors and his assistants searched around, they were unable to find any victim of the disease. Finally my friend had to show them the scar on his own face so that the class could have a diagnostic example of this local disease, and they were satisfied with examining his scar. But in this country, God knows how many nameless corpses each medical student has at his disposal! Therefore, I am certain that a medical student studying in Tehran or Shiraz or any other city of Iran has much more practical training, has done much more surgery, and has done more postmortems than, for example, his counterparts in Europe or America. This is a plus for Iranian medical students which is based on a national weakness, namely, a relatively higher mortality rate.

As for the area of higher education which deals with nontechnical fields or with the arts and literature (the faculties of fine arts and literature both in Tehran and the provinces) or with Islamic studies and Iranian civilization and related research — let me approach them one by one.

The Faculty of Fine Arts [of The University of Tehran] with only two subfields, painting and architecture, is the only university which, on the whole, trains artists. If it is indeed possible to train true artists. However, a quick glance at the walls of the art galleries which have recently become fashionable and a quick stroll down the city's lanes and avenues allow one to see the results of these artists. With a few exceptions, most of their work results in the use of paint, canvas, glass, and iron, which means the use of western manufactured products again. One rarely finds among Iranian architects and artists a person who does not imitate the West or in whose work that quality exists which provides originality and artistic innovation or whose work adds something to the sum of artistic endeavor in the world. Things have gone so far in this respect that we even import judges and critics from Europe and America to judge the work of our own artists.<sup>148</sup>

As for the faculties of literature, as far as one can tell, not only is there not any discussion of literature in a true and universal sense, but even modern Persian literature remains untaught and unknown in these faculties. The ideas of the late 'Abbas Eqbal<sup>149</sup> still dominate the literature programs of these faculties. He deemed only the literature of more than a century ago worthy of

<sup>147</sup> [A variety of leishmaniasis]

<sup>148</sup> Concerning the output of these artists see several articles in *Ketab-e mah* (*Kayhan*, two issues, the first and the last) Khordad and Shahrivar, 1341 [June and September 1962] by Simin Daneshvar, Jalal Moqaddam, and the article by a round table of artists.

<sup>149</sup> ['Abbas Eqbal was one of the greatest modern scholars of classical Persian literature. He edited many works of Persian literature which had remained in manuscript or unpublished form before his time. His meticulous scholarship remains very important today. As Al-e Ahmad mentions, he edited the scholarly journal *Yadgar*.]

scrutiny, understanding, and, criticism. And what about the literature which came afterwards? Nothing! The only thing accomplished by such an attitude towards literature is that we train more people skilled in exhuming old graves. For this reason, literature faculties should be grouped with those units of the universities which handle Islamic studies and Iranian civilization and research pertaining to them, i.e., the faculties of law and theology.<sup>150</sup>

As we saw, those schools felt that by teaching and disseminating religion and religious principles they could avoid the danger of irreligiousness, which is only one of the symptoms of westitis. In a similar manner, our literature, law, and theology faculties feel that, by taking refuge in medieval Arabism, classical literature, chains of transmission and tradition, they can avoid the same danger. This is the reason why our faculties of letters with all of their erudite professors waste their efforts on digging up old graves, delving into the past and research on "al-So-and-So," the famous Arab poet. In these kinds of faculties, on the one hand, a direct reaction to westitis can be seen in the flight of scholars to old, worn-out literary texts and figures and the dead glories of classical literature, and their abandoning of the living present. On the other hand, the biggest stigma of westitis can be seen in their reliance on the views of western orientalists, whom we have already mentioned. When a sympathetic scholar, who is steeped in tradition, who teaches on one of these faculties, and who is intellectually preoccupied by the literary, legal, and Islamic fields, sees how the assault of the West and western industry and technology is sweeping away everything in its path, will, in self-defense and to assert his own existence, think that the more a person can train scholars specialized in the *Kalila va Demna*<sup>151</sup> and its like the better. This explains why the product of the last twenty or thirty years of these faculties has remained so ineffective in society and so stymied when confronted by the recent returnees from abroad. And long live the grand orientalists who make an encyclopedia out of every *Elahinama* and a dictionary out of every *Rishnama*<sup>152</sup> so that these *Kalila va Demna* people can be kept busy discussing "quiddity" and "accident" or "temporality" and "pre-eternity" or the "source of innocence," etc. The products of the last twenty or thirty years of these faculties, with very few exceptions, are master pedants all of whom know the lexicon and a smattering of

<sup>150</sup> [*ma'qul va manqul*, the basic division of the traditional Islamic curriculum. The "intellectual sciences" (*ma'qul*) are those which can be perceived through the senses and human reason, the "received sciences" (*manqul*) consist of knowledge of revealed matters like the Koran and the sayings of the Prophet. The modern name is *Elahiyyat*, or "theology."]

<sup>151</sup> [*Kalila va Demna* (in its most famous Persian recension) is a highly literate and somewhat florid medieval prose and poetic work which is based ultimately on the *Pancha tantra*.]

<sup>152</sup> [*Elahinama* and *Rishnama* are used generically here to represent the body of medieval texts which have been and are the grist for Ph.D. mills and tenure committees in the oriental field.]

biographical detail, obsessively write commentaries on the works of others, and are the discoverers of obscure philological and historical enigmas. All of them are identifiers of graves without corpses and corpses without graves, revealers of the secrets of religious sects and the instances of plagiarism and borrowing of A from B, only a few thousand years ago. All of them write essays on 16th century poets whose number does not exceed the number of fingers on two hands. What is worse than all of this is the fact that most of these people are teachers of literature or administrators in education or judges. God bless the last group, who have bolstered up the Ministry of Justice and given meaning to the independence of the judiciary and, if given the opportunity, can distinguish right from wrong quite well! But those others? What good or benefit have we gained from them? Except for the opportunity to sink deeper into the morass of westitis. Every one of those professors and their disciples have become so deeply immersed in the cavernous regions of their literary texts and their variant manuscripts and have turned a deaf ear to the rest of the world so long that even a car horn will not wake them up — not even the harsh braying of those horns will unclog ears, stuffed with those manuscripts. Day by day we see the dominion of foreign languages expanding and replacing the importance and need for our own tongue; day by day the technical and scientific fields of study divert greater numbers of potential students from fields in the humanities, ethics, and literature. Islamic and Iranian studies (as we have seen throughout this book) become each day less important and more obscure. In this way, our centers of literature, law, and Islamic studies (i.e., their respective university faculties) are just like the clerical establishment which, in the face of the onslaught of the West, took refuge in the cocoon of fanaticism and intransigence. These centers have taken refuge in the cocoon of old manuscripts and are satisfied with turning out pedants of punctuation who know nothing about meaning. These centers are also just like the clergy who are preoccupied with doubts about the number of required prostrations and their discussions of ritual purity and impurity, for they are hung up on the question of whether or not to write the ornamental prefix “*be*” or whether silent “*vav*” should be eliminated.<sup>153</sup> This is exactly how it is. When a person is suddenly expelled from the world of universals he will latch onto minutiae in desperation. When a flood washes a house away or when it is destroyed by an earthquake, you will still find the survivors groping around under the rubble for a door with which to carry the decayed corpse of a loved one to the cemetery.

In the field of education and universities there is another big problem: the hordes who have gone to Europe or who have returned from America, all of whom have come back as candidates for at least a ministerial position and have become glued to their places in the bureaucracy. There is no doubt that

<sup>153</sup> [“Ornamental “*be*”, a prefix added to a preterite verb form which in no way intensifies the meaning of the verb. “Silent *vav*”, the unpronounced letter which appears in the spelling of some Persian words (e.g., *khvab*).]

the presence of each and every one of these graduates from abroad is a blessing. Each is a piece of driftwood in a violent sea. But notice carefully how these blessings, after they have returned, gain a foothold and become established in the administration and turn into worthless chaff. For they have no scope or function, no clout, no open hand or enthusiasm, not even sympathy. Especially when this group of returnees sees itself and its own ideas as worthless in the face of western advisors who are in control of things.

Contrary to popular opinion, I feel that however much this crowd of graduates from abroad increases in number, their power to act will decrease. And the stagnation and disharmony of those agencies which have been susceptible to their influence will become greater and greater, for when we sent these young people, what their area of specialty or technical skill was to be was never planned in advance. These young people went to different corners of the globe of their own free will and initiative, guided by their personal tastes. They studied and experienced things differently; their experience conflicts with what others experienced. Now that they have come back each one must be an individual within the group in a government agency or organization. It becomes apparent how out of step they are and how ineffectual in carrying out any task. The one with French training differs from the one with British or German or American training, each marches to a different drummer. But I must add immediately that if I am optimistic about the intellectual future of Iran it is partially because of this same diversity in the educational backgrounds of our foreign trained graduates. This is the source of the richness of Iran's intellectual environment. Compare it to the Indian intellectual environment which with its overwhelming number of Oxford graduates has become so Anglicized! In any event, since there are several points to be made about these returnees from Europe and America, it is better for us to go over them one by one:

1. Given the present circumstances in the country, these young people mostly resemble the tulips, narcissus, and hyacinths, the bulbs of which we import from Holland and which we grow in large greenhouses in Tehran. Once they flower we pay too much for vases for them and give them as presents to friends and acquaintances who place them in a warm room in the sun where they do not last more than a week. These flowers which lie on top of society's flower basket also wilt in our climate. And even if they do not wilt, in most cases they assume society's colors. Despite all the propaganda written to encourage students abroad to return, I do not think that there is any hope of their returning to serve the country until an environment conducive to their future work here is provided. And that brings up the question: who must provide such an environment? You see then that there are many problems. In my opinion the ones who can prepare the environment for them in this icy hell are those individuals who were forged here and have learned to cope with the weather in this icebox.

2. Most of these young people by conforming in differing degrees to the

free environments and societies they found while living in Europe or America are more or less aware of the concept of freedom and take an active part in their own student federations. Most of them are impassioned and get involved in speeches, activities, demonstrations, and pamphleteering. But, as soon as they return and have to toe the line, those other worlds are soon forgotten. Then again, perhaps it is the passing of their youth with all of its emotion and passion which is itself one of the reasons for this amnesia. But do you not think that such an about face occurs because governments here do not want those speeches and activities and there is no license for such freedoms? Whatever the reason, I myself know of a whole group of these young people who, upon their return, have deserted their cause and have become satisfied with whatever came their way from the patronage cornucopia. And, as if nothing had happened — as if they have never had any passion for liberty. And wife, children and other concerns of life are ever-ready excuses, especially when the wives happen to be foreign.

3. The third point concerns this very matter: a considerable number of these young men return with European or American wives and similarly a very small number of Iranian girls return with European or American husbands. Do you not feel that this is just another problem to be added to the rest of our problems? At a time when the basis of the traditional Iranian family (a wife and husband who are of the same blood, compatible, and familiar with each other) is in a state of dissolution, then the fate of this type of incompatible marriage is quite clear. Like birds without roosts, these young people and their families are the immediate products of westitis. Solving the domestic problems of these mixed households is in itself so much a matter of concern that these young people do not have the stamina or the patience to solve external (i.e., societal) problems. Those who marry foreign spouses can be divided into three groups: (1) People from poor families make their way to the West and study through their own efforts. For this type of person, having a European or American wife is a way of severing ties with roots and relations that are no longer part of the kind of environment suitable for a self-respecting returnee from the West. Having such a wife is also a ladder with which the returnee can elevate himself to higher social climes. The dire consequences of such marriages are crystal clear.<sup>154</sup> (2) Because of the restrictions and inflexibility and impossible marriage regulations in Iran, many are satisfied to marry a foreign woman or man. And now that they have returned, well-informed, with degrees, and knowing foreign languages, they see all of those restrictions lifted and feel, perhaps, that they have brought a souvenir spouse from abroad for nothing. The consequences of such a situation along with comparisons which

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<sup>154</sup> Part of popular thinking on this unpopular occurrence is this: As soon as any man with a foreign wife reaches an important position, it is taken for granted by all that he got there because of his foreign wife. Even if the man may have unlimited ability.

come to them later are quite clear. (3) The third group consists of those (whether male or female) who lose their virginity in Europe or America and begin their carnal knowledge with foreign women or men. Later, when they return, they know no other god and no other type of person is good enough for them or they realize what idiotic mistakes they have made.

In these cases or in others, once a foreign-educated Iranian marries a European or an American, he has done it for the following reasons:

He has married a foreigner because the environment of that foreigner or that foreign milieu has accepted him. (After the war Germany had a shortage of men, and for that reason, more German women have married Iranian men than any other nationality.) Is not this acceptance in a foreign environment by a foreign woman in fact equivalent to being uprooted from the native environment? Will not this in itself result in a kind of chronic shortage of manpower for us, manpower which is foreign educated and trained? In any case, this loss of manpower is more certain when a girl marries a foreigner.

Another reason is that the foreign-educated, young Iranian in Europe or America has wanted to compensate for the painful inferiority he finds in an overall comparison of Iran with Europe and America.<sup>155</sup> It is better to be discreet and I will not go further.

Having heard these explanations, do you not feel that marrying a foreign spouse is itself one of the most vivid symptoms of westitis? If this is indeed so, in my opinion, it is high time for us to send students only to India and Japan for advanced studies with a regular plan attuned to the technical and scientific needs of the country for the next, for example, twenty years. We have limited the venue to those two countries in order to learn how they finally came to grips with the machine and how they have assimilated technology (especially in the case of Japan) and how they have coped with problems with which we are now plagued. If such a plan were put into effect, then in my opinion it would be possible to be optimistic about the educational future of our country by striking a balance between the eastitis of the eastern educated of the future and the westitis of the western educated returnees of the present.

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<sup>155</sup> I first became aware of this point when Feraidun Hoveyda's book *Les Quarantaines* was published in Paris (1962). The book describes a very fine eastern young man caught in the confrontation of the East and the West, and by the internal spiritual conflicts produced by these two worlds. He manages to solve his spiritual problems and overcomes his embarrassment and feelings of inferiority, when he possesses a western woman who several years before had stolen his heart. And a more interesting point in this book is that even the realization of his love also comes after success, whereas before that the hero of the book even in the innermost recesses of his soul did not have the courage to express it.

## X. A Bit About “Machinitis”

Important factors which identify a period of social change with all of its peculiar crises are, from one point of view, progress in science, and, from another, technological developments; and from still another point of view, the possibility of discussion of western democracy. In this country, we merely have the superficial aspects of these three factors (i.e., progress in science, technological development, and the possibility of debate about freedom). We have a sample of these things for display. And if it is established that the speed of mechanization and technological development from a quantitative point of view will produce social crises,<sup>156</sup> we who are just beginning this long, winding road and have to travel some 200 years into the future, are in a much worse position than we imagine. The delirious fever of our crises will be exceedingly more prolonged and more frustrating than that which similar countries have had to undergo.

Suppose, despite all of these problems, we matured and that tomorrow morning we became like Switzerland or Sweden or France or America (thinking the impossible is not impossible), what would we be like then? Would we not again be plagued by problems which in the West have been handled for some time now? And how would we approach these recurring problems? Before I refer to one or two examples of these problems, let me add that the purpose of all this argument is to show the geometrically increasing nature of our problems, what a long way we have to go, and what a deep chasm we have to fill.

One of the basic problems of western civilization (in the western countries themselves) is the constant threat of the seeds of fascism within the body of 19th century liberalism. In France we find the problem of Algeria confronting His Eminence Monsieur De Gaulle. We find military and civilian extremists on the right led by the riffraff of the Foreign Legion who every day color the

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<sup>156</sup> See “Hadaf-e farhang-e Iran” [“The Educational Goals of Iran”] published by the Center for the Research and Dissemination of Educational Documents (Tehran: Ministry of Education, January 1962). This book, *Gharbzadegi*, was also to appear in that collection, but could not.

alleys and streets of Paris and Algeria red with the blood of those in favor of a solution to the problem. In Italy and Germany, there are the remnants of the Brown Shirts, and in America, a new organization, the John Birch Society which even considers Mr. Eisenhower a communist. In England there is the Scottish Liberation Movement. And everywhere else another offshoot of the same problem, in exactly the same proportions. This Foreign Legion is in itself an example of the problem of fascism in Europe. We know that when things get tight for any European bandit or thief or exile or (at the very least) any adventurer, and it becomes impossible for him to remain in his native country, he is forced to leave and enlist in the Foreign Legion. Of course he would do this if he did not become an agent of some gold or ivory or diamond concern in the jungles of Africa instead.<sup>157</sup> In this way, the Bandar 'Abbas of the Belgians is the Congo and the Qeshm Island of the French is Algeria or Djibouti and Madagascar. The Italians have their Somalia and Libya, and the Portuguese their Angola and Mozambique. The Dutch have South Africa and Indonesia (the Boers who control South Africa were originally Dutch). And what in fact is this Legion? It is something resembling the mercenaries of ancient times. What is its function? It consists of the suppression of freedom wherever necessary, service to the oil and gold companies wherever the people are beginning to speak out, and mechanized violence in the interests of the thug who has the most money. From Spain in 1936 to Algeria, the Congo and Angola in recent times — all are scenes of the rack and ruin carried out by this type of gentleman and all were crushed under these thugs' jackboots. The issue is not only that Europe exports its mercenaries with the machines,<sup>158</sup> but more

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<sup>157</sup> See *Voyage au bout de la Nuit*, Louis Ferdinand Céline (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1932).

<sup>158</sup> It is interesting to note that this export of mercenaries is a two-way street: from West to East and vice versa. Having already described the European part of the process, let us cite an example of our own exports. Our own thugs (of course in much smaller numbers, following the pattern of our exports to the West), as soon as things become tight for them and they can no longer show their faces in public [leave the country] guided by the western mercenaries who live here in more acceptable guises: orientalist, experts, dealers in antiques, reporters, and other kinds of agents of new forms of imperialism. They pack their bags and set up camp in the best spots in Europe and America. After things quiet down a bit, they return. I know of a certain ruined bank manager from Tehran, who, after he went bankrupt, fled to London and is now running a *chelow-kabab* restaurant there. I also know a certain bankrupt politician (whom you also know) who for two years was the chief Iranian delegate to UNESCO, and another who was roving ambassador to students abroad (!) and many more of this ilk. Consider also this point: if export of thugs to the east comes in the heels of exports of machinery or is a way of cleansing foreign countries of their adventurous and discontented, it is also a way of making those places secure for their inhabitants; whereas the exports of our mercenaries in most cases is a kind of bonus, easy money, which the ruling circles award to their faithful supporters. You can see the difference! I

importantly that it insures the health and safety of its cities, museums, and theaters at the price of depriving colonial and backward states of their freedom. And now that these colonies are gaining their freedom one after another, let us see what Europe will do with these evil elements, with which it will have to live. We will have a lot of instability in Europe to look forward to. However, it appears from all indications that maybe Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa will be the main bases and refuges for this type of Foreign Legion. Do you not think also that, if worse comes to worse, the legionnaires will change uniforms and will appear in the form of advisers and experts, as the right hand men to the Shaikh of Kuwait or ministers to the Shaikh of Qatar or even in our own country . . . Skip it!

And why is it so? Why is it that these impediments to change occur daily in the fabric of western civilization? In my opinion it is because adventurism, rebellion against society, and the different forms of theoretical and applied mercenary activity are themselves the by-products of regimenting people to the machine. The primary products are western manufactured goods and the secondary products are these three problems. This regimentation of the people is itself also one of the unavoidable results of mechanization. So you have cause and effect together. Conformity in the face of the machine, regimentation in the factories, going to and leaving work right on time, and a lifetime of doing the same tedious job because second nature to all those who work with machines. Attendance at party meetings and unions which require uniformity in dress, gesture, greeting, and thought is also a "third nature" conforming to the machine. Therefore, conformity in the workplace leads to conformity in the party and the union, and this itself leads to conformity in the barracks; that is, for the machines of war! But what is the difference? A machine is a machine. Except one makes milk bottles for children and the other turns out cannon for the small and the large, the puny and the great.

This conformity of behavior, dress, and thought in the service of machines (a thing which Charles Chapin blasted, and if I regard him highly, it is because he caught on to the dangers of our going like sheep to the slaughterhouses of the machine before anyone else) in unions, political organizations and parties, and in the barracks turns into the conformity of thought and dress of the Black Shirts and the Brown Shirts, which every twenty years, as we have seen, draws all the western states into bloodshed. It leads the world into war and leaves terrible reminders of its consequences behind. I will say it more directly: militarism (apart from the fact that it appears on the heels of intensive industrialization and in the search for new export markets) derives its fundamental practices and customs from the machine. From the machine which

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guess even if it were possible to scrap all of the nonsense in this book, this one point (given in a footnote) would be enough to support its assertions.

is itself a product of Pragmatism, Scientism, Positivism, and other such "isms." These days even children know that once a machine reaches the surplus production stage and finds the wherewithal to produce goods for export, the owners of the machine (the companies) in order to gain a monopoly in export markets will enter into open warfare with their competitors.<sup>159</sup>

There is another point that we should not overlook: the political parties in a western democratic society are pulpits used to relieve the feelings of depression of those unstable and neurotic people whose regimented daily lives (their rising on time, getting to work, and not missing the subway) rob them of any opportunity to demonstrate their own free will. We should also especially take note of the fact that fascist political parties and other kinds of groups, extremist in their principles and doctrinaire in practice, do their utmost to cater to the neuroses of these people — from their use of color, the bright red they choose for their flags to the emblems and symbols they have: the eagle, lion, and tiger all of which are in reality the totems of twentieth century barbarians! If we keep in mind also the special initiation and expulsion rites they have and their other practices, we shall soon discover the primary cause of these diseases and the method of their treatment or the way to make sure that they remain chronic. Each of these are problems of the West and the advanced machine-stricken societies, the solutions for which are up to the great minds of those societies!

But as for us, a people who know nothing about democracy and nothing about the machine and therefore no realistic perception of the regimentation necessitated by the machine, the funny thing is that we also have a tailormade party system and democracy! With mechanization we become regimented and then we are induced to join parties and become a democratic society, then introduce that same regimentation into the military — it is as if we have started from the bottom. That is, starting with the military (which by the way is never used for military purposes, except in street fighting) we grow used to lining up, to being regimented and uniform, so that as soon as the machine arrives, our progress (i.e., the machine's progress) will not be slowed down. And this is the most charitable way I can describe our present-day reality. In the West, they arrived at regimentation, political parties, militarization via technology and the machine, however, we were just the opposite, i.e., we went from the barracks and street-fighting drills to regimentation, then politiciza-

<sup>159</sup> These competitors can be anyone, for western free trade (!) knows neither friend nor foe. To the news about the junked tanks which the Belgians bought off the battlefield at El Alamein and, after some repair, sold to the Egyptians and Israelis so that they could be used again in another war, add this item from *Time*:

The Hong Kong Hilton was nearing its opening date when authorities discovered the \$100,000 worth of Chinese furniture and decorations the hotel had imported from Red China in violation of U.S. law that American citizens cannot deal with the Red Chinese. . . (*Time*, July 19, 1963, p. 60)

tion, and then we became servants of the machine. Or rather we want to serve the machine. I will be discreet and stop right here.

Another problem found in western countries and societies is that the situation in the West has changed. It no longer is what it was when western imperialism first came in contact with the East, with Asia and Africa and South America. The nineteenth-century western man who came to these parts along with the first machine manufactured products was completely free to act anyway he wanted. He was an aid of the Khans, Amirs, and rulers. He was both an advisor and advised. His embassy gave sanctuary to the proconstitutionalists in Tehran. In Shiraz any house which unfurled his flag was a place of sanctuary, safe from reprisal in the riots of Qavam and the Qashqa'is.<sup>160</sup> But nowadays when even the primitive natives of the Congo have learned a great deal (from the nationalization of [Iranian] oil, the Suez Canal, and the Cuban sugar companies) and have learned how to recognize the foreigner in all of his guises, and not to overdo their welcome and hospitality, the western man has shed his skin. He's fashioned a new mask so he will not be recognized. If, when western man originally came to the East or Asia, he was a master, a "sahib" (his wife, a "mehsahib"), today he is an advisor or a consultant attached to UNESCO. Even if he is on the same mission, at least he is wearing a more acceptable uniform and does not have the old colonial style pith helmet on his head and is paying attention to form. . . . But we easterners, we Asians, will have not realized that the westerner understands very well that in the second half of the twentieth century one cannot retreat 200 years into the past. We however still have not understood that this newly decked gentleman is the same old rascal.<sup>161</sup>

Moreover, from time to time, the western colonialists also brought along people like Gauguin or Josef Conrad or Gérard de Nerval or Pierre Louÿs on their expeditions — and just recently André Gide and Albert Camus. Each of these men were taken with some of the beauties and originality of the East, remained captivated, and shook western values regarding life, art, and politics to their very foundations. Gauguin brought distilled sunlight and color in his canvases to Europe and so revolutionized the somber and grey painting of Flamand that the antics of Picasso and Dali seem old hat today. Gide in 1934 with his *Voyage au Congo* humiliated and disgraced the gold and ivory concerns before the world. Malreaux informed the world of southeast Asian civilizations (Khmer) which are much more durable and ancient than the four columns of the Forum in Rome or the Acropolis in Athens. And there were others, each of whom in seeking a path to the manners and customs of another kind of existence in the East, Asia, or South America gained access to the

<sup>160</sup> [The writer is referring to the traditional hostility between the Qashqa'i ruling family and Qavam al-Molk the head of the rival confederacy of Khamisa tribes. During the years 1910-11 Shiraz often became the scene of their armed conflicts.]

<sup>161</sup> [A somewhat free translation of the sentence.]

worlds that were unknown in the confines of Europe and the West. Not to mention the case of jazz which is another story in itself. In this case it is now black Africa which is roaring under the New York skies. That same black man who once upon a time came from Africa in slavery in order to pick cotton for the nouveau riche aristocracy of America and for the more western companies in New Jersey [?] and Mississippi, now causes the stage of Carnegie Hall to tremble with his trumpet and drums. It will not be long before he finds his way into the Gothic cathedrals which just prior to World War II only permitted Bach and Mendelssohn to enter.

What I am saying is that while it is true that at the outset of colonialism the West merely sucked the blood of the East dry like some leech, the blood was in the form of ivory, oil, silk, spices, and other material goods. However, the West slowly realized that in addition to these goods, in addition to whatever the museums and factories took away, the East also contained many nonmaterial goods, commodities which universities and laboratories could use. And as we saw, the basis of anthropology, mythology, dialectology, and a thousand other "ologies" was laid in that part of the world on data collected in this part of the world. And now in addition to all of these material goods, the spiritual exports of the East and Asia and Africa and South America form the intellectual baggage of an educated western man, e.g., those sculptors who search for motifs in the primitive sculpture of Africa or those musicians who turn to jazz or those writers who look to the Upanishad and Tagore and Taoism and Zen Buddhism. Who are Thomas Mann or Hermann Hesse? What, after all, is the message of existentialism? Making Japanese gardens, eating Indian food, and drinking tea Chinese-style are now ways in which any newly-hatched teenager amuses himself in the West.

This flight of western man to the artistic and moral values of the East and Africa (which on the one hand is an indication of the disgust or at least the ennui which western man feels about his own environment and culture, and on the other, is a sign of the universalization of culture, and a rather beautiful sign at that) is now little by little entering the realm of politics. Is it not therefore possible to think that, having been concerned with eastern art, western attention has now reached the stage of concentrating on eastern politics? Of course, flight from machinitis requires such an interest. Fear of atomic war dictates this.

Ironically just as the West has turned to eastern culture, we, the west-stricken, abandon our own music without understanding it and think it to be "useless noise," and go on about "symphonies" and "rhapsodies." We absolutely fail to recognize true Iranian painting in our religious portraiture<sup>162</sup> and, keeping pace with the "Biannual," we even think Fauvism and Cubism passé. We have spurned Iranian architecture with its symmetry, central reflecting

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<sup>162</sup> [*shamayel sazi*]

pools and fountains, gardens, cool subterranean rooms, *howzkhana*,<sup>163</sup> sash-windows, and carved wooden window screens. We have closed the doors of the traditional athletic clubs (*zurkhanas*)<sup>164</sup> and forgotten how to play polo. With our contingent of four wrestlers we attend the Olympics which is founded on the basis of the Marathon run<sup>165</sup> which itself symbolizes the defeat of another bogey of a tyrant<sup>166</sup> in ancient times. Incidentally, we never understood why he led armies from this side of the world to that.

Why should the nations of the East not be aware of their own riches? Just because the machine is western and we are forced to borrow from the West, why must we also accept all of the other values of western life and replace our own cultural and artistic values with them. Why must UNESCO's trademark be like the pillars of the Acropolis, and not, for example, like the winged bull of the Assyrians or the columns of the temples of Karnak and Abu Simbel? Why should the eastern nations not present their own customs at international gatherings such as the Olympics? One may mention dancing, archery, and the self-discipline of Yoga as examples.

Another problem with western societies is that, in addition to turning out men who are obedient servants to the machine, they also create new kinds of men whom we may call "prefabricated heros" — just like prefabricated houses. They appear in the celebrated personages of movie stars or astronauts. And of course this is only natural when all members of society are cut from the same cloth, none of them being distinguished from the others in any way — there is no choice but to relieve this uniformity of human mediocrity from time to time with prefabricated heroes and to provide a model so that despair will not become rampant. It thus happens that at the same time Ford Motor Company places its order for a certain number of electrical and mechanical engineers with a university, it also makes a deal with a movie studio to carry out its work. Planned, prefabricated-hero-manufacture is the result. At one time in history, when a certain type of courage (which Plato thought to be one of the four cardinal virtues) was displayed by someone without any pre-conceived plan, that person would become a hero and poets would sing his praises. But today some studio calls upon an actor to display a certain brand of historical or mythical courage in a film and this results in incredible media coverage of that performance. The company, which in any case is selling its product, spends countless sums on advertising and creates incredible biographies for its stars: about their marriages and divorces, the kidnapping of their children, their participation in the civil rights movement, and their

<sup>163</sup> [A large room furnished with a pool and used at summertime as a cool quarter in the house.]

<sup>164</sup> [A kind of gymnasium in which Iranian strongmen practice and compete in traditional weight lifting and isometric exercises.]

<sup>165</sup> [Here Al-e Ahmad, in a footnote, digresses on the Battle of Marathon.]

<sup>166</sup> [A reference to Xerxes, who invaded Greece.]

spending the night dancing with some royal divorcée, etc. They constantly fill the media with these reports some two years before the making of the film, so that finally Reuters and Associated Press pick them up and they even find their ways into the press of Tehran, Singapore, and Khartoum. Then it comes time for exploitation of the publicity and the film opens with great fanfare and important personages on a single opening night in fifteen world capitals. And the result? Another hero is added to the pantheon on the screen; that is, in reality, another historical or legendary hero is robbed of prestige and credibility.

Other examples of this new kind of hero-making, i.e., creating screen heroes out of ordinary individuals, are the astronauts<sup>167</sup> who until recently were not even taken seriously by their own wives or had not been able to get themselves a spouse, but whose fame today stretches to the heavens. And under what circumstances? When the scientists, the makers of the rockets and the basic discoveries of the new fuels for space exploration remain in complete anonymity both in Russia and America. And why? Because the identities of the missile-makers even their very existence are military secrets. But as for those men who guide the rockets: they of course are not secrets, but a means to make fools out of the public. They represent breaks in the wide canvas of uniformity and mediocrity — which is the fate of the masses. They exist so that people can hope and feel that someday they too will become astronauts, etc. And what publicity? What pictures and blurbs! What stamps! What pronouncements! What hype! And with what preliminaries! And groundwork! All ignoring the fact that the astronaut is a mortal like any other, with a bit more courage or a bit more luck. For we do not know about the astronauts who disappeared in space. After all, *that* is a military secret! In any case, do you not feel that some astronaut, in spite of the fact that he is a mortal like the rest of us and in spite of the human rights accorded to him in these experiments, has become something on the order of a guinea pig? This represents a decline in human potential! The directors of the program themselves do not hide the fact that the astronaut is bravely willing to “give up his life in the cause of humanity” — I say it is in the cause of the advancement of technology! Once upon a time, the prophet Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son for the sake of God, but today they sacrifice men in the cause of technology and the machine. And they do it in style! They do it with such fanfare that you find there are many people from small villages from Siberia to America ready to enlist or have already enlisted in this sacrifice. Is it not an escape from the banality which the machine has imposed on man? In any case this is the latest intrusion of the machine into the human sphere!

<sup>167</sup> [Al-e Ahmad is, of course, referring to the Mercury Astronauts. Tom Wolfe's recent book, *The Right Stuff* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1979) reveals that *Gharbzadegi's* critique of instant heroism and the space program is quite restrained.]

At the outset of the era of rockets many ridiculous things were written. For example, we had read that they detained Christ in the fourth heaven because of the needle<sup>168</sup> and now spaceships can cross all seven heavens. This kind of masquerade was an attempt to hide the fact that the heavens had passed from the realm of the sacred and had become part of nature. Part of a natural world which, if it could be made to serve the machine, would also become even higher than heaven. And other kinds of propaganda. But this ignored the fact that in this cruising in the heavens, dogs and monkeys had the honor of setting the precedence for this debased form of humanity. In any case, you see that in industrialized countries the issue is not only that the machine requires obedient human servants with a certain set of characteristics, but that, at the price of such human sacrifices mentioned above, the machine is creating a new kind of person. Man in this animal-like obedience is being stripped of his humanity. In such headlines as: "Female Astronaut Marries Fellow Astronaut," "Female Astronaut Pregnant," and "Astronaut Couple Blessed with Child" I see the soul of humanity being toyed with. Pragmatism and Scientism have reached such an advanced state that they put two human beings through rigorous experiments like mice, then mate them, and for what? So that it can be proven that humans living outside of the atmosphere can reproduce? Then what? This the crux of the matter! In any case these are the problems of advanced societies. Let us say that what we know is enough. But we who do not have machines, who are not an advanced society, who must not become entangled in such problems, who must not manufacture obedient and uniform people, who have no need for prefabricated heroes — just see what we are doing! We are imitating that same kind of hero-making in the case of award and medal winners, or in our selection of representatives, or in the selection of some simple villager who must recite poetry at a ceremony, etc. What is worse is that on the first page of every report written for some state educational program we read about training the average man and other such nonsense. Of course, it is more than evident that this is another sign of westitis. But is it enough only to put a label on the disease? I would like to talk at more length on one of the most dangerous effects of machinitis which we find in our educational system.

If it is possible to agree on the role of education, one could say that it is the discovery of outstanding minds that will finally be able to lead the caravan of society to its destination despite all the social problems arising out of the crisis of westitis. Under such circumstances, the goal of our educational system should not and cannot be to produce regimented, conforming people who will look like being all cut from the same cloth, so that they will tolerate the status quo and accommodate it. Especially for us, a people who live in times of

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<sup>168</sup> [It is reported that as Jesus was led to heaven by angels, he was questioned as to whether he had any worldly goods. After a search it was found that he possessed a needle and a broken piece of pottery. He was therefore detained in Fourth Heaven.]

change and crisis and during a period of social transition. We will be able to stand the burden of all these changes and crises only with the help of self-sacrificing and principled individuals (who in the popular argot of psychology are called "non-conforming, pig-headed, and unstable"). Only with their help will we be able to cure the kinds of social disorders described in this book.

In the past, our elitist educational system was only geared to produce the leaders of the country, as in the Safavid or Qajar periods or prior to them. The extent to which the system was organized was related directly to the nature of the ruling establishment. The system was not extensive and only a limited few were allowed into it.<sup>169</sup> Today contrary to the expectations of the age, the leadership of the country remains as it was in the time of the ancient kings — in the hands of a limited number of feudal and aristocratic families, the creatures of the court, and the so-called 200 families. This ruling elite is itself a vermiform appendix of the great foreign political and economic powers. However, from another point of view, things have changed; education has expanded and penetrated deeply into different classes and layers of society. Although it produces many more graduates education only yields paper pushers; that is, numberless candidates for leadership. In such a situation our educational system whatever its probable characteristics and whatever its advantages or its faults, definitely has this one quality: it will continue to add to the numbers of dissatisfied people who have studied to become bureaucrats or heads of bureaus and have reached the very gates of leadership but have been denied access, because they are neither tied to any form of political or economic power, nor are they members of those 200 families, nor are they major owners of movable assets.

The present state of education in our country is contradictory. From one point of view, the ranks of the educated in schools and universities with all their faults grow larger daily; i.e., the possibility of creating and expanding the intellectual climate increases. From another point of view, the ruling establishment grows more limited, more confined, and more exclusive. The sieve of SAVAK becomes finer. How can we deal with this contradiction? You see that our age is one of deepening social conflict. Under such circumstances, to train stable and obedient individuals and to check man's powerful and rebellious instincts is the most dangerous and stifling step which can be taken; and this step is being taken by the Ministry of Education with the help of SAVAK, the military, the present Literacy Corps, and the future Health Corps!

The duty of the education and the politics of the country these days is to aid in the sharpening of differences and contradictions; to sharpen conflicts between generations, classes, and modes of thought so that at least the problems will be made known. Once the problems are made known, of course solutions will be found. The duty of education is in particular helping to smash

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<sup>169</sup> See the report "The Goals of Education in Iran" mentioned above.

any wall surrounding the ruling center of the country, any wall which has made it exclusive. What is needed is the democratization of the country's leadership, a way to free it from the monopoly of certain individuals or families. One cannot be more candid than this. The duty of education is to tear down all barriers that block progress and perfection. To aid that side of the intellectual, realistic, and human equation that points to the future, not the other side which is in decline, which is not fit for our times. Our education and politics must make use of youthful, strong, and dynamic forces as a kind of diabolical power to uproot all of the ancient institutions with their heavy load of inertia in a matter of seconds and to use the rubble of those institutions as building materials for creating a new world.

In this age of change we need men with strong wills and principles; men who are specialists and uncompromising. We do not need the west-stricken men we described above, nor do we need men who are storehouses of human knowledge or who are jacks-of-all-trades and masters of none, or men who are merely good, obedient, or congenial, compromising and pleasing all and sundry. These were the kinds of people who have written our history until now. We have had enough of them.

The West has been lucky in that after its encyclopedists finished their work there was no longer any need for the types of insect mentioned above. That is, the West no longer needed universal intellects, great teachers, and walking storehouses of human learning. It was thus that a division of labor came about and people with specialized knowledge appeared in the West. However, the expertise nurtured in the West is a dehumanized form of expertise. We must begin right from this point; we must train experts with personalities. Is our educational system capable of turning out such individuals? If it is not, why is it not? Where does the fault lie? Wherever it is it must be found and eliminated.

Therefore one can say that, whereas the West was forced to replace personality with expertise by technology (and capitalism) — i.e., as a result of machinitis — we were compelled by westitis to replace both personality and expertise with pseudo-nihilism and the training of the west-stricken. I will say it once more: our schools and universities, either on purpose or because of unconscious historical necessity, turn out these types of [west-stricken] people and plug them into the country's leadership slots. These are west-stricken people with their feet in the air, who have no faith in any value or belief. They have no political parties, no human aspirations, no tradition, and no myths. They sink into a kind of vulgar epicurianism and become perverted and dulled by sensuality. Their attention is fixed on their sexual organs and fleeting external appearances. Never thinking of the future, always caught in the present. All of this is reinforced by our radio, press, textbooks, boarded up laboratories, the westitis of our leaders, the perverted thinking of our returnees from abroad, and the imitation *Kalila va Demnas* of our pedants-of-punctuation Ph.D.'s in literature. And at the same time, our government,

using all of its powers, cannot even camouflage this terrible situation very well; every day it resorts to new forms of drugs to lull the people into political quiescence. These drugs generally fall into three categories, that is, they cause the following three types of melancholy or syndromes in people:

I. *The Delusion of Grandeur Syndrome*. This occurs because an insignificant individual sees his own greatness in the grandeur which is falsely ascribed to him in national pageants, extravagant festivals, tinsel victory arches, crown jewels kept in the vault of the National Bank, and the grand uniforms, saddles, and equipage of cavalry! It is also ascribed in the gold braid of the military brass, in the huge buildings and even huger dams, the building of which, they say, has involved the squandering of national wealth. In short, in anything that will please the eye and that will puff up an insignificant man so that he will imagine himself to be great.

II. *The Delusion about Ancient Grandeur Syndrome*. Even though this syndrome could be considered under the heading of the Delusion of Grandeur Syndrome, I have decided to discuss it separately, because it has to do more with the ears than the eyes. We hear this type of syndrome more than we see it: Pretentious bragging — foolish self-glorification — Cyrus the Great and Darius! — self-aggrandizement based on irrelevant past glories. And what pours out of our radio and thereby fills the press. This syndrome flows through our ears. You have probably observed how a young man returning home, tired from a hard day's work, will sing to himself as he passes through the empty streets. Do you know why? He is afraid of being alone. He fills his ears with the sound of his own voice so he will not be afraid. Radio performs the same function. Our radios are switched on everywhere so that they can fill the silence with their noise; so that they can fill our ears.

III. *The Constant Persecution Syndrome*. This is achieved by manufacturing a new, imaginary enemy every day, terrorizing the people by packing the media with reports about these new enemies, and causing them to withdraw more than ever. This will force the people to be even more thankful for what they have. Constant persecution takes many forms: one day it is the discovery of Tuda [Communist] Party network, another day it is the war against opium, then the war against heroin, later the Bahrein affair or the dispute with Iraq over the Shatt al-'Arab,<sup>170</sup> later it is a story about kid-nappers, then the same old terror which is inspired by SAVAK.

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<sup>170</sup> What was both lamentable and at the same time laughable about this issue is that while we, with the help of the learned scholars of our literature faculty, were changing the name "Tigris" [*Dejla*] to "Arvandrud" (imitating Naser who called the "Persian Gulf" the "Gulf of Arabia"), the Iraqis were turning back every oil tanker which was headed for the Shatt al-'Arab. And it was in this way that the Abadan Refinery was completely shut down for two months in 1961.

## XI. The Hour of Resurrection

### Drew Near<sup>171</sup>

It is now time to put my pen down. I would like therefore to close by discussing the works of some great men and by offering a kind of prediction, which is not really a prediction, but the unavoidable terminus of the road on which we and the rest of the mankind are being led.

Albert Camus, the late French author, wrote a book called *la Peste*. It is probably his best work. It is the story of a city in North Africa which for some inexplicable reason is the scene of an outbreak of plague. It is exactly as if it were marked by destiny. Perhaps the plague came from heaven itself. First mice, diseased and terrified, pour out from their holes and suddenly appear in the lanes, the streets and avenues of the city. Within a day every garbage can becomes packed with their tiny bodies, each mouse having a red spot on the side of its mouth. Later the people become infected and begin to die in such numbers that the sirens of the corpse disposal wagons never cease. The corpses have to be taken forcibly (at spear point) from the survivors so that they can be buried in lime pits. They are forced to quarantine the city and within its plague-infested walls each of its inhabitants scurries about in search of something. One seeks a remedy for the plague, another an escape route, another searches for drugs, and one seeks muddy waters to catch fish. In addition to the dominion of death and humanity's vain attempt to escape it (and the grief which hangs in the air like dust) there is something which is more prominent in that city. It seems that the only effect of the plague, that deadly fiend, is to speed the people's progress on whatever path they had previously chosen in life. Whether they were just or unjust, moral or immoral, the presence of the plague not only fails to stop anyone from living as they had in the past, it makes them live at a faster pace.

We who are infected with westitis are exactly like the people in that city; the pace of our corruption has been quickened.

When *la Peste* appeared some of the right-wing critics said that for

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<sup>171</sup> [Koran LIV, 1.]

Camus the plague-stricken city was an allegory of Soviet society. Others (left-wing critics) said that he had planted the seed of the Algerian insurrection in the book. Others said many things which I cannot recall nor would they be pertinent here. . . . However I started to translate the work not because of the critics' comments, but to discover the author's basic point. I had finished about one-third of the translation, when I suddenly understood; that is, I saw Camus' point. Once I discovered that, I abandoned my translation. I realized that "the plague" for Camus was "mechanization," the killer of beauty, poetry, humanity, and heaven.

These thoughts remained with me until *Rhinocéros* by Eugène Ionesco came out. Once again we find a city in which people lead their lives in comfort. But suddenly an epidemic breaks out in the city. Notice that as with *la Peste* (as well as in the formula "westitis = cholera") once again we are dealing with another infectious disease. And what is the nature of that disease? Becoming a rhinoceros! The symptoms? First there is fever, then the voice changes and becomes coarser, then a horn sprouts on the forehead, then the power of speech is transformed into the power to roar like an animal, and finally the skin becomes thicker. All are subject to the disease: housewives, neighborhood grocers, bank presidents, mistresses, etc. All of the victims appear on the streets and trample the city, civilization, and beauty into the ground. Of course I had no need to translate this book in order to understand the issue.<sup>172</sup> I have, however, always hoped to translate this play into Persian one day and in commentary here and there show how my esteemed fellow Tehranis are also gravitating towards "rhinocerism," the last solution to the problem of confronting the machine.

Again the issue remained in my mind until just recently (1961) when in Tehran I saw the film *The Seventh Seal* by the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman. He is a film maker from the northernmost tip of the western world, a man from the area exactly adjacent to the long, arctic nights. The film takes place in the Middle Ages. Once again we encounter a plague-stricken land. A knight has returned from the Crusades, beaten, tired, and dejected. Note carefully! He has returned from the Crusades, during which he was never able to find the Truth, or in the Holy Lands he saw the same things that his European descendants see today in that world victimized by colonialism in the East and Africa. But this knight unlike modern Europeans did not come to the East in search of oil, spices, and silk. He came in search of the Truth. The Absolute Truth at that; that is he thought he would find and experience God in the Holy Lands of Palestine. Exactly like the Apostles who, when they thought they had seen God, spread the word of the Gospels to the four corners of the earth. This Swedish knight who came all the way from the lands of the long arctic nights to the very heart of the dazzling light of the East sought God.

<sup>172</sup> Although I eventually did translate it.

But, instead of Him, he found Satan blocking his path. At times he appeared as an opponent in a game of chess, or as a man of the Church, but always with the face of 'Ezra'il, the Angel of Death, who spread the seeds of plague in that land and was now the reaper of men's souls. At the very time when this knight was returning from his pursuit of the Truth, tired and battered, the Church was ranting about the torments of hell and promising that the Day of Judgment was at hand. This is Bergman's allusion to the fact that the era of faith is over and the era of empirical knowledge has begun. The era of belief is at an end and the age of experimentation is at hand; and experimentation leads to the atomic bomb. These are Bergman's allusions, or at least my interpretation of them.

And now I, not as an easterner, but like a Muslim of early days who believed in divine revelation and thought that before I died I would witness the resurrection of mankind on the plan of Judgment Day; I see that Albert Camus and Eugène Ionesco and Ingmar Bergman and many other artists (all from the West itself) have become apostles of this message of resurrection. All of them have given up on the future of mankind. Sartre's Erostrate pulls a gun on people on the street with his eyes closed. One of Nabokov's heroes runs someone over with his car. Meursault, the "Stranger," kills a man merely because of the intensity of the sun. These fictional destinies are all translatable into the actual fate of humanity — humanity which, in order to avoid being trampled by the machine, must don rhinoceros hides. I understand all of these fictional destinies to be omens, foreboding the Hour of Judgment, warning that the machine demon if not harnessed and put back into the bottle, will place a hydrogen bomb at the end of the road for mankind.

Therefore I will end by purifying my pen with this verse from the Koran:

The hour of resurrection drew near and the moon was rent in twain . . .

## Notes

1. The transliteration system followed in the text is a modified form of that used by *The Encyclopedia of Islam*.
2. Wherever possible the original texts of the authors' references have been used and checked with his translations or quotations.
3. As is clear from the author's introduction, the text used for this translation is the second edition (Tehran: *Entesharat-e Agah*, 1343 [1964]). The 1961 pirated edition was consulted to fill in what appeared to be censored portions of the second edition.
4. Footnotes contained within brackets [ ] have been supplied by the translator.
5. The first section of *Gharbzadegi*, "By Way of an Introduction," consists of a Persian translation of Merle Travis' song *Sixteen Tons*. It has not been included in this translation.

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